

cigar aficionado

THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

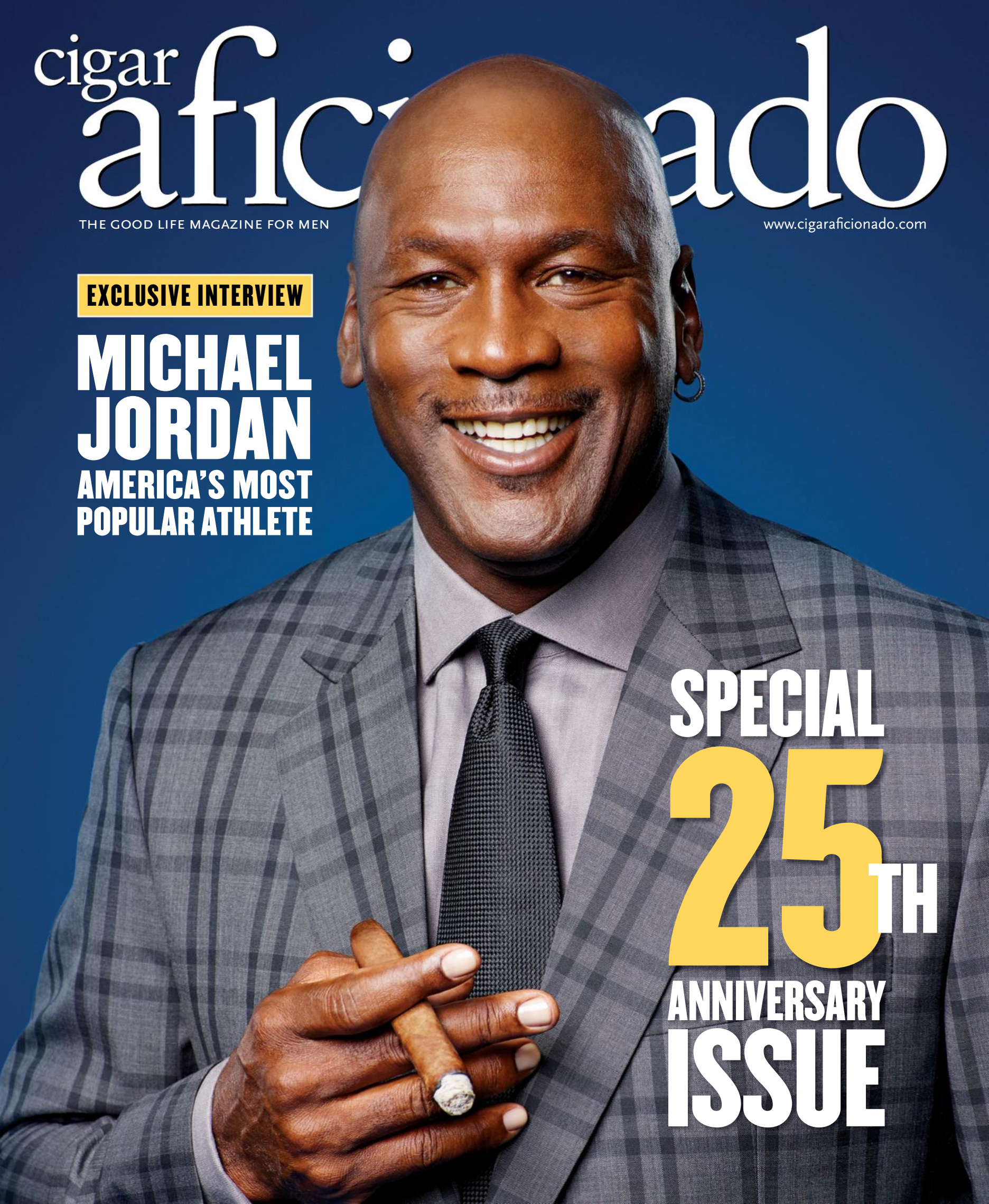
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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

**MICHAEL
JORDAN**

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POPULAR ATHLETE**

**SPECIAL
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE**





2017 CANADIAN WHISKY of the YEAR



"To say this is a masterpiece is barely doing it justice."

— Jim Murray, Whisky Bible

"It completely changes what we expect out of a Canadian whisky."

— Clay Risen, The New York Times

"This really is sensational stuff."

— Tony Sachs, Robb Report

"You simply cannot get more bang for the buck than this in the spirits world"

— Larry Olmsted, Forbes

"A great showcase of what Canadian whisky can be"

— Jake Emen, Eater



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CROWN ROYAL Northern Harvest Rye Blended Canadian Whisky, 45% Alc/Vol. ©2017 The Crown Royal Company, Norwalk, CT.

The logo for Crown Royal Northern Harvest Rye is centered in the upper half of the image. It features the brand name 'Crown Royal' in a large, elegant, dark green script font, with a small 'TM' trademark symbol at the end. Below this, the words 'NORTHERN HARVEST' are written in a smaller, dark green, all-caps sans-serif font. Underneath that, the word 'RYE' is prominently displayed in a large, dark green, all-caps serif font. The word 'RYE' is flanked on both sides by a golden wheat stalk icon. A thin, horizontal golden line is positioned directly below the word 'RYE'.

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RYE

COCKTAIL CLASSICS, CROWNED

From the cocktail's golden age, three classic recipes that are both timeless and irresistible. A perfect match for the rich, smooth blend of CROWN ROYALTM Northern Harvest Rye Blended Canadian Whisky.

OLD ROYAL

1.25 oz. CROWN ROYAL™ Northern Harvest Rye
Blended Canadian Whisky
0.25 oz. Demerara Simple Syrup
2 Dashes Aromatic Bitters
Dash Orange Bitters

Garnish: Orange Twist and Lemon Twist

Technique: Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass, add ice, stir until chilled. Strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice and garnish.

KING OF MANHATTAN

1.25 oz. CROWN ROYAL™ Northern Harvest Rye
Blended Canadian Whisky
0.5 oz. Sweet Vermouth
2 Dashes Aromatic Bitters

Garnish: Orange Twist or Maraschino Cherries

Technique: Chill cocktail glass. Combine all ingredients in a mixing glass, add ice, stir until chilled. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish.

CANADIAN MULE

1.5 oz. CROWN ROYAL™ Northern Harvest Rye
Blended Canadian Whisky
0.75 oz. Fresh Lime Juice
3 oz. Ginger Beer

Garnish: Lime Wheel and 2 Dashes Aromatic Bitters

Technique: Combine CROWN ROYAL™ Northern Harvest Rye Blended Canadian Whisky and lime juice in a shaker, add ice, shake well and strain into a highball glass over fresh ice. Top with ginger beer and garnish with lime wheel and two dashes of aromatic bitters.



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CROWN ROYAL Northern Harvest Rye Blended Canadian Whisky, 45% Alc/Vol. ©2017 The Crown Royal Company, Norwalk, CT.



Crown Royal[™]
NORTHERN HARVEST
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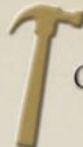
It's not just the beautiful mountains and sweeping views that set Napa Valley apart. Our summer days can be surprisingly warm, while our nights are cool, so grapes can ripen at the perfect pace to achieve a singular, luxurious character. There's human character at play too—of people seeking to create the world's best wine and a striving towards excellence that continues to raise the bar. My family's been here a long time, yet this place continues to move us more and more, as we're driven like many others in the pursuit of making great wine.

Chuck Wagner



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For decades, Padrón smokers have shared with us the stories of special moments in their lives that have been distinguished by smoking one of our cigars. Striving to create great cigars worthy of such special times is our singular motivation, those moments shared with family and friends. The Padrón Family thanks you for your continued loyalty and trust in the Padrón name.

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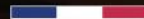


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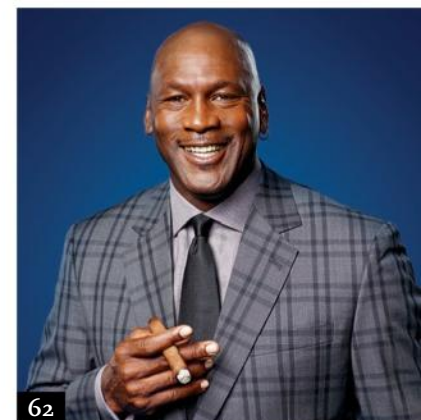
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ON THE COVER
Michael Jordan, the player turned owner. Photographed exclusively for CIGAR AFICIONADO by David Yellen

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505

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With its rich volcanic soil and variety of microclimates, Nicaragua was the obvious choice to raise our “rebel child” from the Romeo y Julieta family. Made from 100% Nicaraguan tobacco for a spicier, bolder experience, the new Romeo 505 Nicaragua is more than a cigar—it’s a way to be.

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SURGEON GENERAL WARNING:
Cigars Are Not A Safe Alternative
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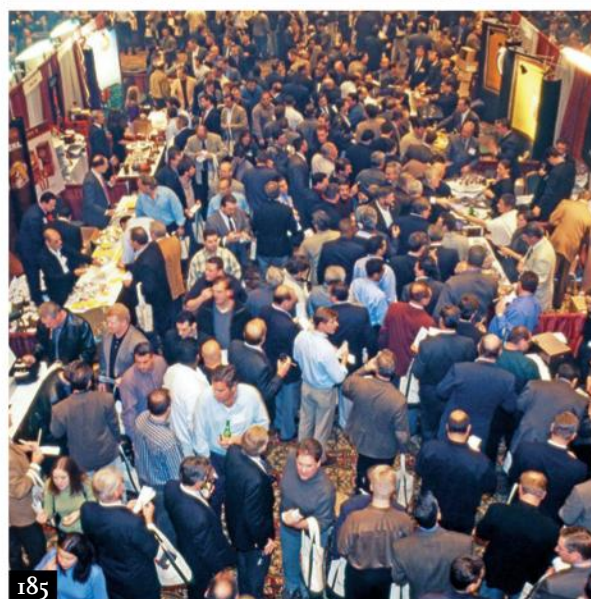
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142



150



185

highlights

The Rocky Patel Vintage 2003 Cameroon, a 93-point-smoke, took our top score for this issue. The cigar is made with a delicious wrapper from Cameroon, a leaf that was once an industry standard but one that is getting increasingly rare in today's cigar world. While that Rocky Patel cigar is made in Honduras, this was a particularly strong tasting for cigars from Nicaragua, as Nicaraguan cigars provided the top score in four out of our six categories. The Flor de Las Antillas Maduro (92 points) was our standout corona gorda, the Nat Sherman Panamericana Secreto (91) tied for best petit corona, the Oliva Serie V tied with two other smokes (including Cuba's heralded Bolivar Belicoso Fino) for top figurado and a consistently superb Padrón Serie 1926 tied for best robusto. The E.P. Carrillo Dusk Solidos from the Dominican Republic led in our grande category, which rates fat cigars.



TOP CHURCHILL

ROCKY PATEL VINTAGE 2003 CAMEROON CHURCHILL

HONDURAS

93

When this cigar debuted in 2011, it marked the first time that Rocky Patel used a Cameroon wrapper on a cigar bearing his own name.



TOP CORONA GORDA

FLOR DE LAS ANTILLAS MADURO CORONA

NICARAGUA

92

The maduro version of this brand, which won Cigar of the Year honors in 2012, was a store exclusive before being turned into a regular-production line last year.



TOP FIGURADO

BOLIVAR BELICOSO FINO

CUBA

92

Cuba's strongest Bolivar tied with the Oliva Serie V and the Romeo by Romeo y Julieta Aging Room Small Batch F25 Cantar as the top figurado in this issue.



TOP GRANDE

E.P. CARRILLO DUSK SOLIDOS

DOM. REP.

92

It's the fattest cigar in the line, and owner Ernesto Perez-Carrillo said he created the blend as a tribute to Silvio Perez, a legendary tobacco grower and broker.



TOP PETIT CORONA

NAT SHERMAN PANAMERICANA SECRETO

NICARAGUA

91

The Nat Sherman Panamericana Secreto tied with the Fonseca Nicaragua Petit Corona and Cuba's Partagás Short for the highest-scoring petit corona in this issue.



TOP ROBUSTO

PADRÓN SERIE 1926 NO. 9

NICARAGUA

91

Padrón's powerful Serie 1926 No. 9 tied with the Serino Royale Maduro XX Robusto to claim the top spot in the robusto category for this issue.




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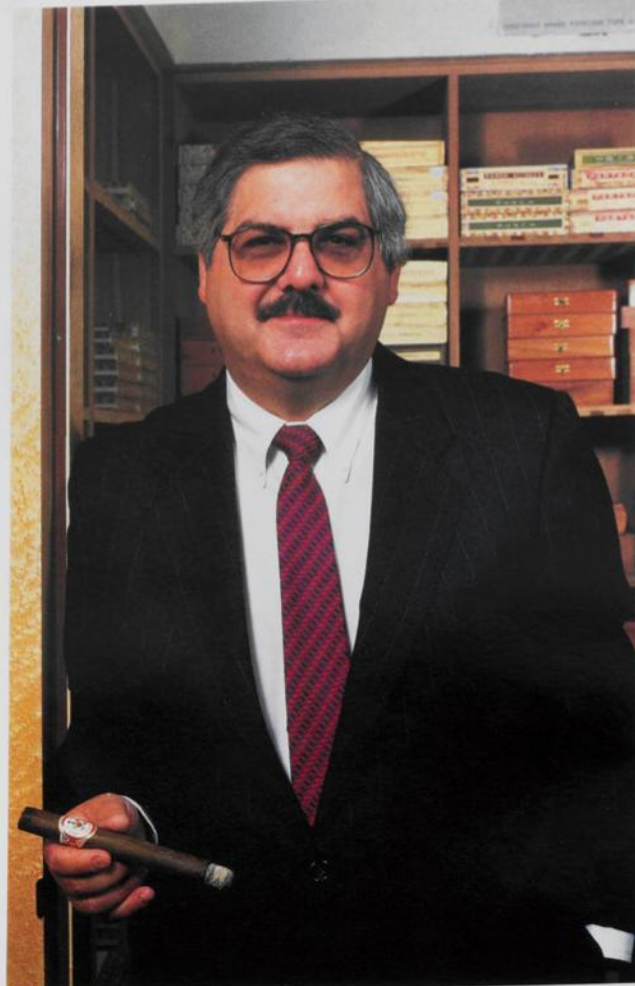
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25 years ago
1992

EDITOR'S NOTE



A NEW MEN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

To launch a new magazine in 1992 calls for a stiff drink and a fine cigar.

I must confess at the outset, however, that the force inside me is so strong that I have abandoned conventional business wisdom. I acted solely on my publishing instinct, and the passion I hold for the subject of this new publication.

I've dreamed for more than a decade about creating a magazine for cigar lovers. But it was during a visit to Cuba in the fall of 1991, while "on assignment" to write a cover story for *The Wine Spectator*, that I realized I could wait no longer. I decided then and there to make the dream a reality.

The response to CIGAR AFICIONADO to date has been extraordinary. I had never realized that cigar lovers were so starved for information. Inside this magazine, you'll discover new facts and secrets about cigars: how they're made, who makes them and which brands are the best. In each issue we'll also report on our editors' blind taste tests which will rate cigars from around the world based on their quality.

CIGAR AFICIONADO is about taste. But it is not limited to the taste of a great smoke. This magazine intends to awaken and explore many of the pleasures that drive successful men.

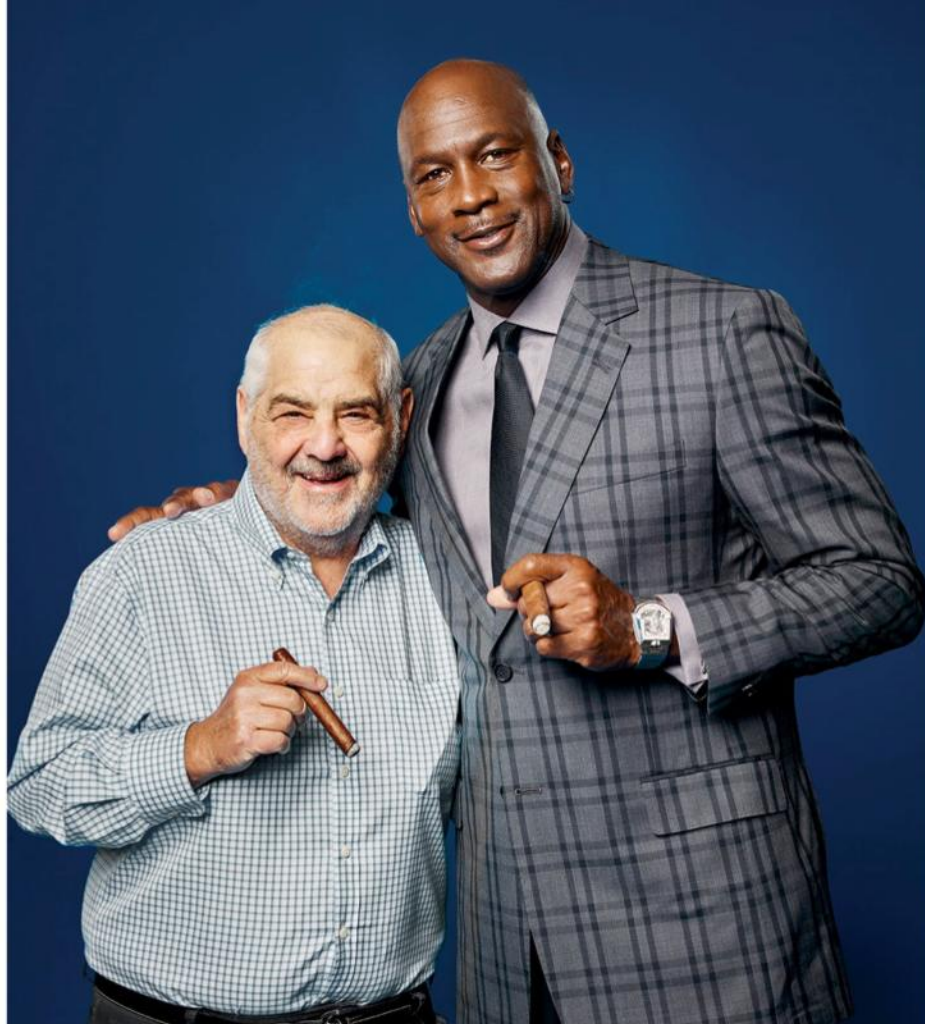
Men like you want to know about great resorts for special vacations, as well as the world's best restaurants where fine food and wines are matched with well-stocked humidors. You want to understand men's drinks—Cognac, Scotch, vintage Port and fine wine. Here, you will find insights into these potions of pleasure, as well as specific recommendations unlike those found in any other magazine.

CIGAR AFICIONADO will also explore collectibles, unique trips, emerging hobbies, gambling, fashion and new ideas, in a style different, we believe, from any other men's magazine. Our editors will travel the world, making every effort possible to turn you on.

CIGAR AFICIONADO may not be for every man. But we do dream about creating a very special magazine for the individual who wants the very most out of life. If you share that desire, welcome. This magazine is for you.

Very truly yours,

Marvin R. Shanken
Editor and Publisher



Twenty-Five Years of *Cigar Aficionado*

Twenty-five years ago I fulfilled a longtime dream with the birth of CIGAR AFICIONADO. My life has never been the same.

The world was different in the fall of 1992. The U.S. economy was coming off a tough recession and the recovery was slow. The stock market was in tough shape and unemployment was at its highest level in about a decade, nearly 8 percent.

Great time to start a magazine, right?

The cigar market was also in bad shape in 1992. Sales had been flat for years, cigars were selling for low prices to an aging consumer base and some brand owners were trying to discourage their children from following in their footsteps. Many thought the business didn't have a future. A lot of people felt the same way about this magazine. If you read my Editor's Note from that first issue, which we have reprinted to the left of this page, you can sense a hint of trepidation in my opening words: "To launch a new magazine in 1992 calls for a stiff drink and a fine cigar."

I didn't care. When I created CIGAR AFICIONADO I didn't do it for money and I didn't give a damn that everyone told me not to do it. I did it because I love cigars, and I didn't want to die without having a cigar magazine.

CIGAR AFICIONADO did better than anyone thought it would, including myself. It helped elevate cigars in the public eye as we showed the world the love and dedication that goes into making this artisanal product. It helped demystify the cigar-shopping experience, as our blind tastings provided an objective buying guide to the daunting world of the store humidor. And it also

brought cigar smoking into the light, out from the shadows. Some of the world's most famous people have been on our cover over the past 25 years, from Jack Nicholson to Robert De Niro, from Arnold Schwarzenegger to Demi Moore. (You can vote for your favorite cover on our website; see the cover contest bracket in our special insert that appears later in this issue for more details.)

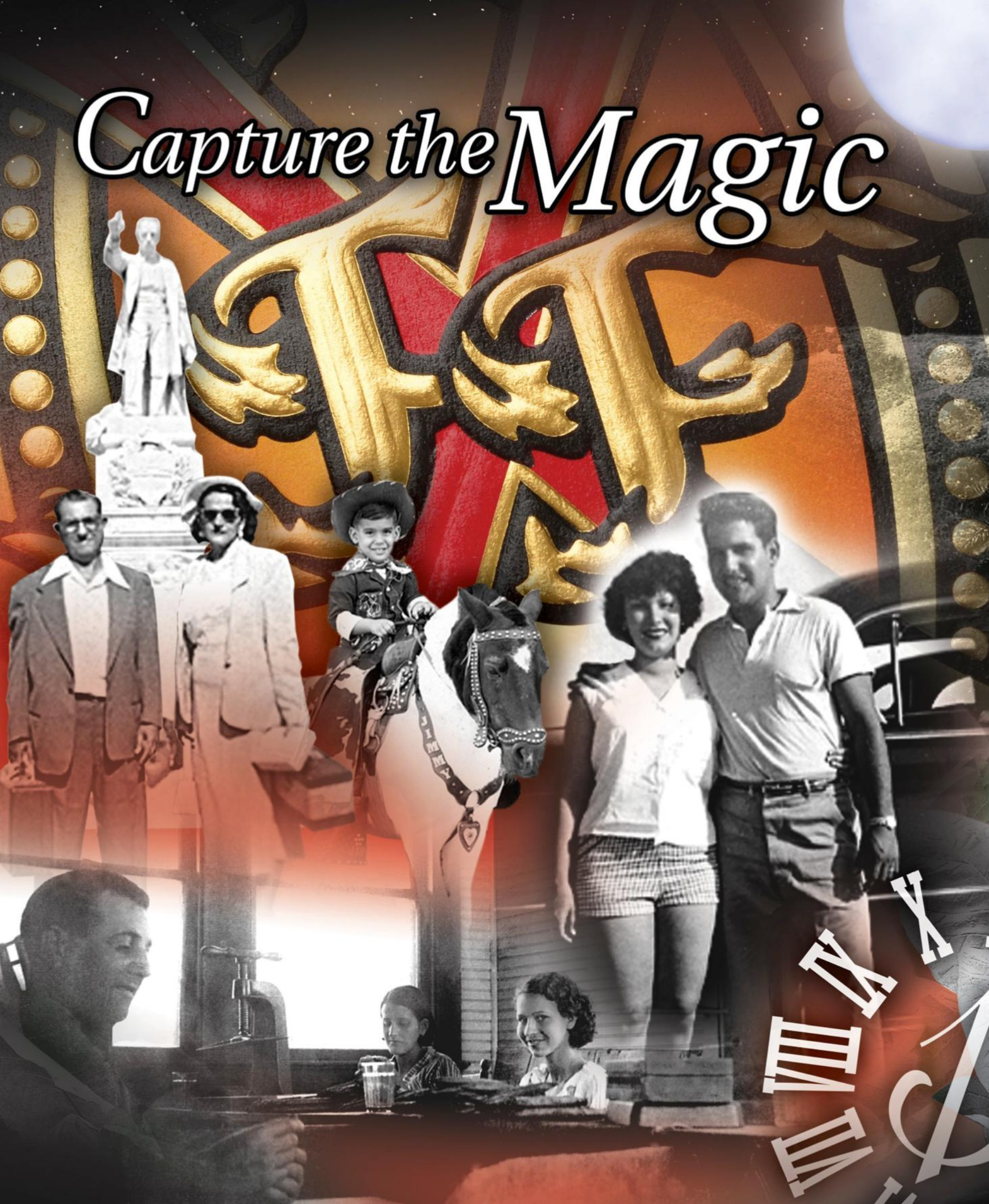
I've had the pleasure of interviewing a long list of intriguing cigar lovers over the years, including Michael Jordan, the most popular athlete in history. He appears on our cover for the second time, and sits down for an all-new interview talking about his remarkable business success and his incredible love of fine cigars—he smokes six a day. The Q&A begins on page 62. It's a conversation I'm sure you'll enjoy.

CIGAR AFICIONADO would never have worked without the tremendous support of its readers. Some of you have been reading the magazine since that very first issue. Many of you have been with us for years. And I'm sure there are a few of you who are picking up your first copy. Thank you—all of you—for helping make CIGAR AFICIONADO a success beyond my wildest dreams.

Very truly yours,

MARVIN R. SHANKEN
EDITOR & PUBLISHER

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With Cigar Aficionado's 93 rating as an endorsement, Inspirado Orange is a complex, medium bodied smoke with a lingering sweetness.



BLACK

Using a unique growing process, Inspirado Black combines bold pepper spices with dark chocolate and coffee notes.

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Tobacco Use Increases The Risk of
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out of the humidor

Dear Marvin,

I just finished reading the October issue today. I have been reading CIGAR AFICIONADO for several years now and the October issue is one of your best football issues ever. The article on NFL history was great. I also enjoyed “Ten Things Every Cigar Smoker Should Know.” I have enjoyed cigars for only about six or seven years now and always relish any new information about cigars and the enjoyment of them. I appreciated that this article was written for both new and longtime cigar smokers. Please bring more of these informative articles to us on a regular basis. I devoured the Cigar 101 section on your website.

I first heard about your magazine while listening to Rush Limbaugh, even before I started enjoying cigars. I had my first cigar at my daughter’s wedding reception and have enjoyed them ever since. Off and on, I bought a few copies of the magazine from a magazine rack and then my wife gave me a subscription as a Christmas present a few years ago. I’ve been hooked ever since. I find few things more pleasurable than enjoying a cigar on my patio while reading CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine.

Just this past Wednesday I took the opportunity to try the La Flor Dominicana Andalusian Bull. I have frequently enjoyed most of LFD’s cigar line, particularly their Double Ligero Chisel, but the Andalusian Bull I found to be one of the best cigars I’ve ever tried. It is absolutely worth every bit of the 96 rating and the Cigar of the Year ranking. The flavor and aroma are fabulous. It holds an ash very well, draws superbly, smokes very smooth and the size is nice and large. I loved it so much that I ordered two boxes that night. Thank you for enlightening us about this wonderful cigar.

Alexander Piek Jr.
New Lenox, Illinois

Dear Marvin,

Congratulations on a great latest issue—particularly all the NFL items. Terrific articles. I also enjoyed the article by Jeff Williams, “Golf’s Top 10 Final Rounds” but have to question how he could omit Johnny Miller’s final round 63 at Oakmont in 1973 to win the U.S. Open. In that round, Miller came from six shots back and only four golfers shot in the 60s that day. I believe this is considered by many to be one of, if not the, best final



“I find few things more pleasurable than enjoying a cigar on my patio while reading CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine.”

—Alexander Piek Jr., New Lenox, Illinois

rounds in golf history so I was surprised that Mr. Williams did not include it in his top 10.

Bill Rankin
Gibsonia, Pennsylvania

Dear Marvin,

I am a 30-year smoker of cigars and a long-time CIGAR AFICIONADO reader. Please do not make any more special issues that are not about cigars. I realize that sports and cigars can go well together. However, not all smokers care about sports. I, and I’m sure many others, stopped caring what those overpaid people do after grade school. Your magazine has always been about the “classy cigar lifestyle” and should stay focused on that.

Dr. Larry Lior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Dear Marvin,
I have been smoking cigars for over 25 years, and the article in your October issue by Gregory Mottola ["10 Things Every Cigar Smoker Should Know"] was, in my opinion, the best written article for the person who only smokes occasionally as well as the avid daily smoker. Hats off to Greg for his ability to wordsmith a great piece of writing about essential cigar knowledge.

Todd Golin
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Marvin,
My compliments on such a beautifully produced magazine. I received my subscription as a gift from my daughter. "10 Things Every Cigar Smoker Should Know" was excellent.

David Szakacs
Warren, Ohio

"You have my thanks for saving our Cuban experience and making it a trip to remember for a lifetime."

—Craig Smith, Odessa, Texas

Dear Marvin,
Your "10 Things" piece seemed to leave a few gaps. For example, your "Cubans Aren't Always the Best" seemed redundant to your otherwise good advice. The "sangria effect" was also a puzzle. In 50-plus years of enjoying cigars (even on six nuclear submarine patrols as one of "Rickover's finest"), it has never occurred to me to inhale, whether in or out of training for the Ironman or the Boston Marathon. A good cigar has always seemed to me a low-cal "dessert" with a pleasant and calming effect—no coughing or light-headedness. As for "label envy," I am taking your practical advice to not risk a tear and find that a suitably curved index finger achieves the same result of modesty. Also, ring gauge (undefined) and "firmness" affect burn rate, *ceteris paribus*. Finally, would you suggest a humidity range for home storage?

Ed H. Trottier
Aiken, South Carolina

Editors' Repsonse: Whether or not Cubans are the best is one of the most frequently asked questions by beginners and one of the most debated subjects by connoisseurs. Our position on the matter needed to be addressed. Hopefully, if Cubans ever become legally sold in the U.S., more Americans will be able to make the decision themselves. To answer your question about humidity, we recommend keeping cigars at no less than 65 percent relative humidity and no more than 70 for the best results.

Dear Marvin,
We just completed our second trip to Cuba in two months. The first was very disappointing because we scheduled all of our tours through the cruise line. The highlight was meeting our tour guide Reiner, a professor of American Studies at the University of Havana. We stayed in touch through email and when we returned we had our own personal guide, a pink 1953 Chevrolet

convertible, and the June 2015 CIGAR AFICIONADO as our guide. We hit all the top cigar shops on the way to Santy for lunch. You were not kidding when you said it was off the beaten path—it took some effort but we ended up at a blue door and were buzzed into a wonderful dining experience. Dinner that night was El Aljibe and just as predicted it was more than we could eat.

I left my CIGAR AFICIONADO with my new friend and we are already planning a trip in March. Hopefully the new rules from Washington will not do away with people-to-people visas. The only ones who would be hurt are the Cuban people. They are kind, friendly and resourceful. You have my thanks for saving our Cuban experience and making it a trip to remember for a lifetime.

Craig Smith
Odessa, Texas

Dear Marvin,
The tobacco industry's approach to the revival of older varieties could prove as a model for industrial crops facing natural threats ["Heirloom Seeds," August 2017]. Coffee seeks heirloom varieties for survival. As far as major crops go, arabica coffee's genetic gene pool is one of the world's least diverse; making it highly susceptible to disease, pests and drought. The more varieties in existence, the more diverse the gene pool. A diverse gene pool provides a toolbox of DNA to tackle the ever-evolving threats to an agricultural crop. The coffee industry has tackled these threats with research being funded mainly by those within the industry.

Tobacco on the other hand, appears to be tackling gene diversity with its marketing departments; leveraging the consumer's hedonic interest in heirloom varieties. Creating demand from the consumer is not only a more robust and viable way to fund industry research, but a win-win for the consumer and the industry.

It appears the coffee industry can take a cue from tobacco.

Michael Giudice
Monroe Township, New Jersey

Dear Marvin,
I love reading CIGAR AFICIONADO and the diversity of articles you publish. The magazine is great from cover to cover and I can't wait to submit a picture of my wedding (with lots of cigars of course) to the Moments to Remember section. It is also nice to know that we have a strong force fighting the over-regulators in Washington, trying to keep the innovation in the cigar industry alive.

As a novice I still don't have a great grasp on size/wrapper/brand considerations. It would be great for you to run a detailed beginners guide to cigars and explain how wrapper, size, filler, country of origin and brand can all make the cigar. When I walk into my local cigar store, I would love to have more confidence in picking out a cigar for the occasion and being able to point friends and family in the right direction.

Thanks for producing such a great magazine.

Daniel Miller
Chicago, Illinois

Editors' Response: Thanks for the comments, and welcome to the wonderful world of cigars. Visit our Cigar 101 section at the newly redesigned cigaraficionado.com. It has all the information you need to educate yourself on the details of cigar smoking. ❖



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RATED
95





Marvin -

Congratulations on 25 remarkable years promoting The Good Life. Since publishing the premiere issue of Cigar Aficionado back in 1992, you've magnificently revolutionized the cigar world, and to this day, the magazine remains at the forefront as the "Bible of the Industry."

Cheers to you,

Rocky Patel

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cigar aficionado

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Voting Schedule

1st Round: 10/9 - 11/5

2nd Round: 11/6 - 11/12

Sweet 16: 11/13 - 11/19

Elite 8: 11/20 - 11/26

Final 4: 11/27 - 12/3

Championship: 12/4 - 12/10

Winning Cover Announced: December 11, 2017

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Must be legal U.S. resident, 21 or older. Ends 12/10/17 at 11:59 p.m. ET. 1 entry/vote per round. Prize award includes \$1 surcharge to winner as per applicable law. Void where prohibited. See Official Rules at website for full prize information, odds of winning and other details. Sponsor: M. Shanken Communications, New York, NY.



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CHAPTER I

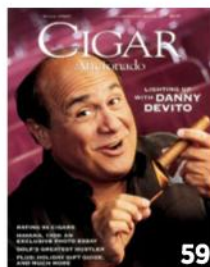
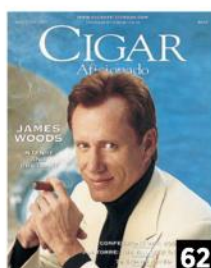
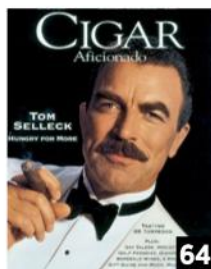
SWEET NOTES





CHAPTER II

RISING HEAT



11/26



Final 4: 11/27 - 12/3



Championship: 12/4 - 12/10



cigar aficionado 25th Anniversary

Winning Cover:

In honor of our 25th Anniversary, *Cigar Aficionado* is organizing a special contest that revisits a quarter-century of celebrating cigars and those who love them. Basically, it's a tournament bracket. The contenders? A selection of our most memorable covers, from today back to the start of the magazine in 1992.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS: Between now and December 10, each week we'll feature pairs of covers facing off. Readers visit our website and vote on which one they prefer. The winning cover in each head-to-head matchup advances to the next round. Quarterfinals, semifinals—and in the end, one cover will rule them all.

The bracket runs from October 9 until December 10. On December 11, the ultimate winning cover is revealed.





READERS' CHOICE COVER CHALLENGE

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Announced on December 11

Championship: 12/4 - 12/10

Final 4: 11/27 - 12/3

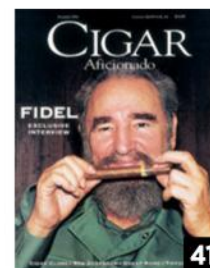
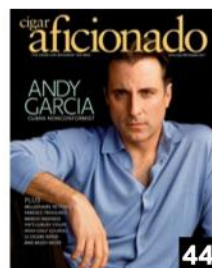
Elite 8:

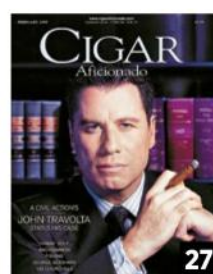
Special Grand Prize

Each round you vote in, your email is entered to win a special box of vintage cigars from the personal humidor of Marvin R. Shanken, editor and publisher of *Cigar Aficionado*. The more rounds you vote in, the higher your chances of winning.

See the full timeline and vote today
coverchallenge.cigaraficionado.com

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Must be legal U.S. resident, 21 or older. Ends 12/10/17 at 11:59 p.m. ET. 1 entry/vote per round. Prize award includes \$1 surcharge to winner as per applicable law. Void where prohibited. See Official Rules at website for full prize information, odds of winning and other details. Sponsor: M. Shanken Communications, New York, NY.







CHAPTER III

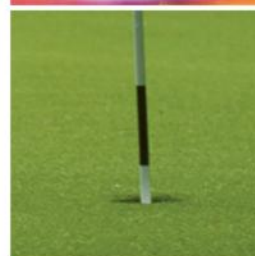
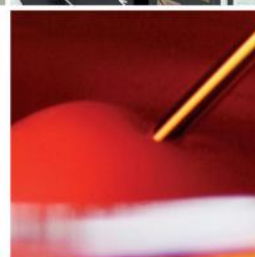
SPICY EDGE

GOOD LIFE GUIDE CLASSICS

The Good Life Guide may not have been born until shortly before CIGAR AFICIONADO's 10th anniversary, but the pursuit of excellence has been part of our DNA from the get-go. The section started with just seven categories and soon Time, Places and Gourmet joined the regular roster. On the occasion of our 25th anniversary we tapped the archives of some of our favorite Good Life Guides from the past.

good life guide

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GOOD LIFE GUIDE
CLASSIC

2011

The Places section has taught us that the world is blessed with many welcoming hotels, resorts and even private estates for hire. Casa de Campo combines a full-amenity resort with world-class golf and the chance to visit one of the country's largest cigar factories.

Casa de Campo, La Romana, Dominican Republic

How do you improve on one of the greatest golf destinations in the world? You go on a spending spree of \$40 million to refurbish the hotel's rooms, build a new reception and pool area overlooked by a completely redone restaurant and then add a spa to compete with the top facilities around the world.

That's what happened in Casa de Campo, with the finishing touches completed by the winter 2010 season. An additional complex of new guest rooms will also be ready for the 2011 winter season.

The Sirio Maccioni family, of Le Cirque fame in New York, oversees two restaurants on the property: The Beach Club by Le Cirque, an open-air eatery overlooking Minitas Beach, and Le Cana by Il Circo, the fusion cuisine restaurant in the main hotel building. But there are other fine dining places to eat on the property too: La Casita at the Marina is a great seafood palace surrounded by the sizable yachts that make ports of call there, and La Piazzeta, in Altos de Chavon, which is a replica of a Tuscan hillside village, sitting high above the Chavon River with sweeping views of the entire 7,000-acre resort and the Caribbean coastline.

The Cygalle Healing Spa in the main hotel complex is as fine and completely outfitted a modern facility as any you will find.

Each treatment room is a private oasis with a shower and a sitting room as well as complete services for the relaxing vacationer or the weary golfer.

That brings us to the golf, a series of courses built by Pete Dye. There are few golf resorts anywhere in the world that have more outstanding courses. The Teeth of the Dog has six oceanside holes that give it the name, but it is a challenging test of golf for all of its 18 holes; it consistently ranks in the top 50 courses in the world. Dye Fore, the latest addition to the group reminds some of Kapalua on the front nine, and a windswept Scottish links on the back nine. From the tips, it stretches out to a mammoth 7,700 yards, a challenge for the most accomplished or most foolish golfer. The Links course, while less challenging, is a welcome respite from the other two courses.

If there's a downside to this property, it is simply how large it is. You have to be ready for rides in a provided golf cart to get just about everywhere. The beach is about 10 minutes by cart from the main hotel lobby. But if you're looking for a true retreat, and the feeling that it is never crowded, Casa de Campo is for you. And, if you want a real getaway, rent one of the Villas with up to six bedrooms; the houses are fully staffed and most have private pools.

—Gordon Mott

Aging Room

Quattro F55M | Maduro

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Fine Fabrics

Remember not so many fiscal periods ago when the sartorial pinnacle was reached by raising specially bred sheep in temperature-controlled, chemical-free sheds, piping in music and hoping to break wool fineness records measured in fewer than 12 microns? To be sourcing cloth for softness bragging rights may seem like conspicuous consumption right now, but that's no reason to give up on the joys of a suit well-tailored from fine, functional cloth with smart patterns.

Holland & Sherry's Dougal Monroe reports a focus on fabrics that combine today's requisite standards of comfort with a durability that is not only more practical, but allows a garment to pleat and drape beautifully. This is done by weaving superfine cloths with a double-weft technique that makes the cloth slightly thicker and heavier. The company hasn't forsaken the upper fabric levels as it offers its elegant and luxurious All-Black Super 200 and cashmere blend, especially for evening wear.

Discerning fans of fabric should also consider other types of thread such as the Tom James's cloth woven from an easily renewable resource—bamboo—that is feather light and cashmere soft. Tom James also makes a blend of Super 160 wool and Angora rabbit (not goat), which has a hollow-fiber coat with a halo fluffiness.

Meanwhile Ermenegildo Zegna has developed a warm-weather fiber called Cool Effect that has an exclusive finishing treatment that allows dark cloths to reflect sunlight similarly to white fabrics.

Zegna's newest wool twist is Micronsphere, a fiber that uses nanotechnology to make the fabric not only fine to the touch, but allows it to repel stains by mimicking the way the leaves of a lotus flower resist water and dirt.

Loro Piana's latest development is The Wave, a fabric that crosses Super 130 wool with a filament of the thinnest silk by using an exclusive twisting technique that creates a three-ply super yarn and hence a fabric that is softer, more elastic, resilient, stable and breathable.

Of course, the stratosphere of superfine is being revisited as well. Loro Piana and Holland & Sherry offer the finest vicuna imaginable, and the former maker also bestows its Record Bale award for the finest sheep's wool produced each year. This year's winner came in at 11.5 microns and will make about 50 suits. Don't expect a colorful range of patterns at that heady level, however. "You know where you find imagination?" laments New York City tailor Alan Katzman. "In a better economy."

—Jack Bettridge

GOOD LIFE GUIDE CLASSIC 2009

This section is called Style for a reason. Fashion is fickle, but true style never goes out of, well, style. The foundation for that is fabulous fabrics that look and feel great—a conceit we have never forsaken.



25 YEARS *of* LEADERSHIP

We cheer for the birth of Cigar Aficionado back in 1992.
We celebrate the publication that has pushed our industry forward.

We cheer for Leonel Raudez becoming General Manager of our factory back in 1992.
We celebrate the man who has led our crafters forward.

25 years are easier said than done.
25 years of achievements deserve recognition.

Thank you both for these 25 years.





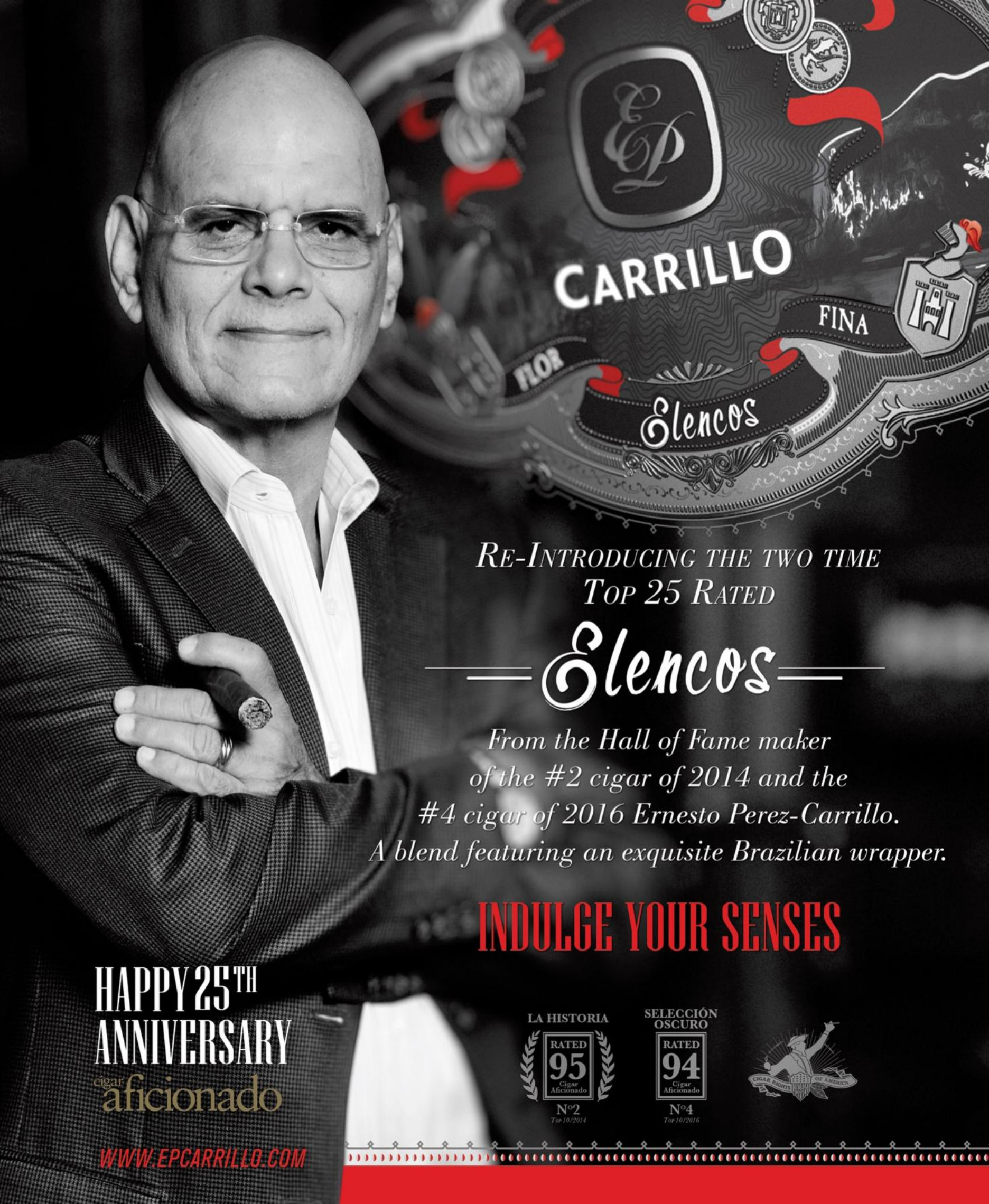
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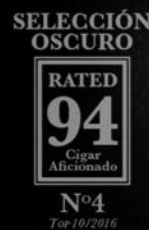
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GOOD LIFE GUIDE
CLASSIC

2013

While Gourmet was a latecomer to our list of Good Life Guide topics, once we admitted our gluttony, we tasted some delicious dishes...and, yes, lots of bacon. Though in retrospect, it seems that the common theme was to eat like James Bond.

James Bond Shrimp

Moments after dispatching an encroaching thug in the film, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, James Bond, portrayed by George Lazenby, helps himself to a mouthful of caviar and declares it, "Royal Beluga—north of the Caspian." Well-versed in Champagne, spirits and women, Bond also has a gourmet's sensitivity (even if he does occasionally dabble in excess), and his preferences often run to seafood.

Though the subject receives less mention in the films, food plays a larger role in many of the James Bond novels penned by Ian Fleming, who endowed his character with his own penchant for classic British cuisine. In *Moonraker*, during a multicourse dinner with M at Blades, Bond samples smoked salmon, cured in the Scottish Highlands, accompanied by toast and Jersey butter, before starting on his meal of lamb cutlets, asparagus, buttered peas and new potatoes. "The best English cooking," he asserts, "is the best in the world."

One of Fleming's favorite dishes, and one of Bond's as well, was a Lancastrian dish called potted shrimps. Served at the author's favorite London establishment, Scott's, the dish consists of tiny, sweet brown shrimp from northwest England's Morecambe Bay, encased in spice-flavored butter. (Long ago,

the butter would have served as preservative and precluded the need for refrigeration.) Though the shrimp of Morecambe Bay are hard to come by stateside, larger shrimp can be substituted (as can crab or even lobster), provided they're finely minced.

The preparation is simple: melt two sticks of butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add a quarter teaspoon of nutmeg, a pinch of cayenne pepper and one tablespoon of minced shallot. Cook for one minute, and add a half pound of cooked, chopped shrimp. Cook for one minute more, and finish with a half teaspoon of anchovy paste, two teaspoons of lemon juice and salt to taste. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the shrimp to an appropriately sized bowl or ramekin, and spoon the remaining butter otop. Chill in the refrigerator or freezer until the butter sets, and serve with toast points, watercress or arugula and lemon wedges.

By no means do potted shrimps make for a healthful meal, but as Bond argued in Fleming's *Thunderball*, a man can't do his work on carrot juice.

—Lizzie Munro


GOOD LIFE GUIDE
CLASSIC
2012

When we assigned items for the Good Life Guide in the 20th anniversary issue, the concept was everything had to be over-the-top. And while over the years we've test driven our share of hot performance cars—from Ferraris to Lamborghinis—everyone agreed that the luxury and elegance of a Rolls limo was the one that fit the bill.

Rolls-Royce Phantom

There's a 90-minute wait at the Vinsetta Garage, a classic, Deco-era service station newly transformed into Detroit's hottest new eatery. But the line of hungry diners snaking out the front door parts like the Red Sea as we pull up in the new Rolls-Royce Phantom, with the young hostess dashing out for a look before letting us know there's a table waiting.

For those wondering what the 1 percent of the 1-percenters drive, this is it. And it doesn't take long to realize a Rolls is as much about the power of brand perception as it is about owning the ultimate in elegantly bespoke automobiles. Whether pulling up to the Lodge at Pebble Beach or a night club in New York, heads swivel and doors open.

The Phantom boasts the massive presence one would expect of a Rolls-Royce flagship, adopting an only slightly less ostentatious grille than the original (1925) version of the saloon car, topped by the classic Spirit of Ecstasy hood ornament that has adorned the brand's products for nearly a century. The size of a full-size pickup, it is not a vehicle that disappears into the crowd.

Slip behind the wheel and you can't escape the sense of tradition. True, the Phantom [pictured here is the 2018 model] is a very modern car, well-equipped with the latest technology—from the new eight-speed gearbox to the slick infotainment system borrowing the best iDrive technology developed by German parent BMW. But the linear heritage is equally apparent in the details of the hand-stitched leather and mirror-gloss wood trim that has required nearly 100 hours of careful trimming and polishing by craftsmen whose parents and grandparents likely plied their trade on the Rolls line before them.

Tipping into the throttle one can't ignore the pure heft of the car's near three tons, yet its 453-horsepower, 6.75-liter V-12 has enormous pulling power, readily keeping up with the kids in their muscle cars who foolishly expect to leave you lumbering behind. No, you're not going to weave through the S-curves like a Porsche Panamera, but the big Rolls maintains surprising poise even in aggressive driving, with little body roll in corners.

But you should expect that. Odds are that the person up front is a chauffeur, whose charges slide into the absolutely cavernous rear cabin through a pair of "suicide doors." There they'll find an elegant decanter waiting, along with cut crystal glasses. Sadly, it will be up to the new owner to supply the Château Margaux or Dom Perignon. Of course, all key controls, such as the climate and audio systems, are duplicated in the back, as well. And our Rolls came equipped with the latest in mobile office technology, including fold-down rear tables that handily concealed a pair of compact computers.

Anyone who wonders just how the rich are different from the rest of the folks in line at the Vinsetta Garage need only spend a few minutes inside a Rolls-Royce Phantom. To own the experience takes \$398,000—before gas-guzzler fee and \$100,000 for the options we enjoyed.

—Paul A. Eisenstein

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GOOD LIFE GUIDE CLASSIC

2016

Our search for great watches has brought us from grandly complicated pieces priced in the six-figure range to easily accessible, but stylish Swatches. However, only the Breitling Emergency would help rescue you from a shipwreck or downed plane.

Breitling Emergency II

Fans of James Bond may recall Breitling's role in 1965's *Thunderball*. The ingenious Q outfitted the brand's Top Time dive watch with a Geiger counter, so the spy could locate stolen atomic bombs. The prop sold at auction for \$160,000, but you can buy a working Breitling watch at retail that offers its own real-life gadgetry worthy of 007. The Emergency II (\$15,825 in steel with rubber strap) will transmit a radio call for wearers (secret agents or not) in distress.

Breitling spent years developing the followup to the original 1995 Emergency, which worked on the 121.5 MHz international air distress frequency. The next-generation Emergency II houses a dual personal locator beacon (PLB) that operates on that frequency (the most reliable for homing in on those in distress) and the 406 MHz emergency beacon, which transmits digital information to orbiting satellites in compliance with the Cospas-Sarsat international satellite alert system.

Thierry Prissert, president of Breitling USA, explains that the brand collaborated with an institute specializing in aerospace, defense and industry to create circuitry small enough for the watch to house the dual PLB and still be comfortable. The brand was similarly challenged by the need to incorporate two antennas in the watch's 51-millimeter titanium case. Heightened energy demands also required the development of an innovative rechargeable battery system that is 1,000 times more powerful

than the cells that are typically used in wristwatches.

To activate the beacon, you unscrew the cap on the lower right side of the case, extend the main antenna to the correct length, and the second antenna on the opposite side releases and activates the transmitter.

Emergency II's transmitter system is designed to operate independently of the electronic chronograph with functions that include a 12/24-hour analog and digital display, 1/100th second chronograph, alarm, timer, second time zone and more, all separately powered by Breitling's COSC-certified SuperQuartz movement, which the brand claims is 10 times more accurate than a standard quartz movement.

Release of the new watch in the U.S. was delayed for two years as Breitling awaited FCC approval. The holdup was that a wrist-worn dual PLB was unique and had no certification standards or category within the FCC. Prissert adds that Breitling ultimately requested a special waiver to sell the timepiece in its own category.

According to Breitling, the original Emergency has saved the lives of more than 20 people. Emergency II doubles down on that technology, combining peace of mind for pilots and adventurers with the swaggering sex appeal of a secret agent.

—Laurie Kahle

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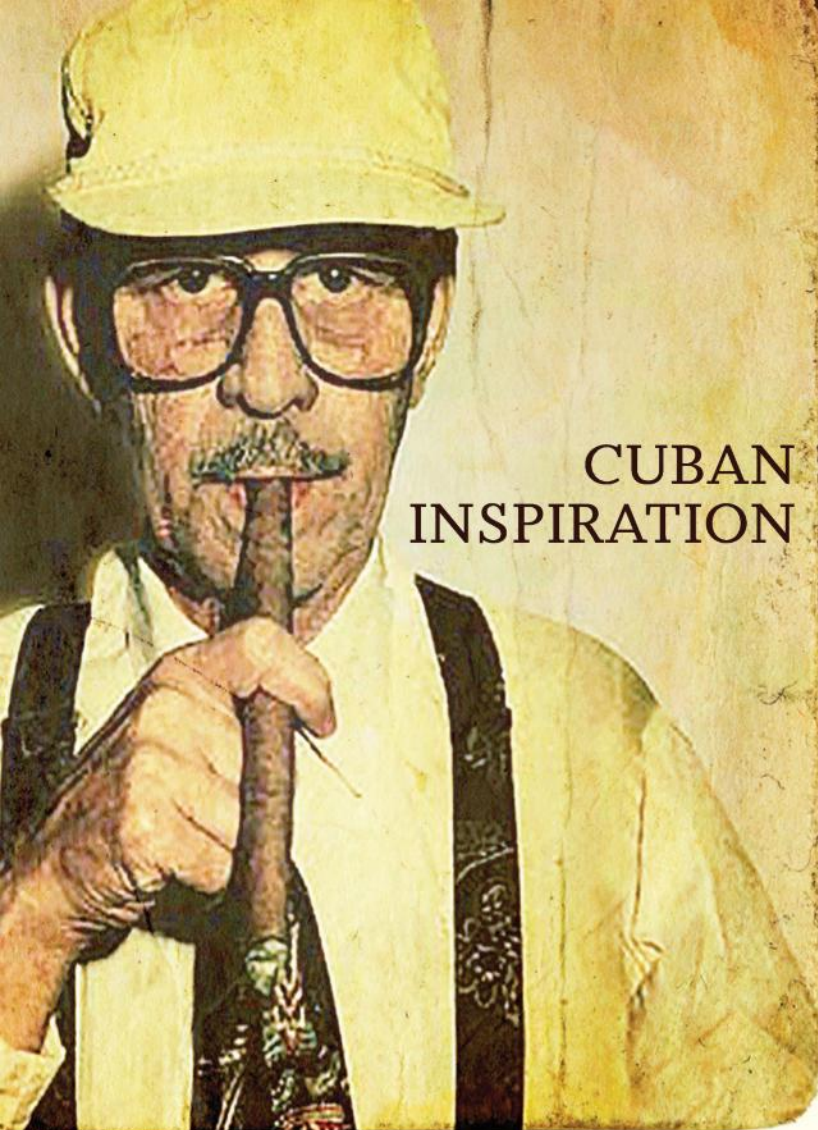


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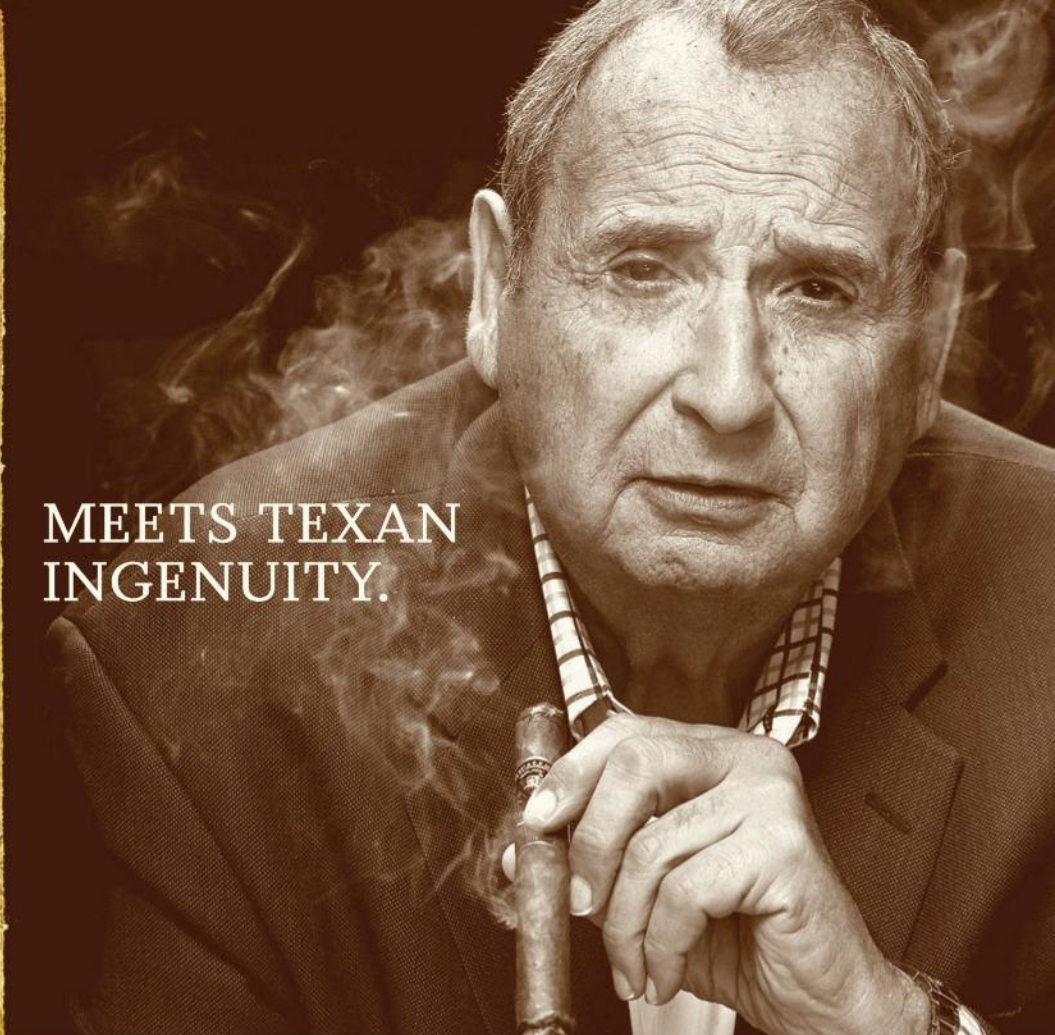
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Manhattan Project

A theory of relativity should drive any study of what is perhaps the most classic of cocktails: the Manhattan. The brown spirits version and forerunner of the clear Martini, this mix of whisky and vermouth is simple, yet remarkably variable. Making it right hangs on perfecting the ratio of ingredients, and any dedicated Manhattanite will rejigger it to suit each brand he pours. To prove the point, we embarked on a volatile Manhattan Project, testing a list of superior Bourbons in proportions of two-, three- and four-to-one with vermouth. The results, while not explosive, were sublime.

Bulliet Bourbon Frontier Whiskey (90 proof), with its rye-heavy recipe, was best-served at a 2-to-1 ratio, where its character of Christmas spices popped. **Buffalo Trace** combines sweet vanilla and spices, both of which shined at 2-to-1, allowing the bitters to come through. The **Evan Williams Single Barrel Vintage 2000** (86.6 proof) spoke of vanilla and caramel and found its stride at the intermediate ratio, revealing wood and nuts. Another high-rye profile Bourbon, **Four Roses Small Batch** (90 proof), smacks of licorice and cloves, and it showed off well when mixed 3-to-1, with hints of spiced apple appearing.

We chose the new **Maker's Mark 46** (90 proof), which adds wood and nuts to the smooth and vanilla-informed original version, and found that a 3-to-1 ratio accommodated the flavor better than the stronger mix we prefer with the standard Maker's. We hesitated to try the new **Knob Creek Single Barrel Reserve** at 4-to-1 because of its 120-proof strength. Our instincts were right. Much better to back off to 2-to-1 where the whiskey's sublime mix of caramel and spice also exhibits chewy orange and citrus character. Smoothness and drinkability are marks of the Tennessee sour mash **Jack Daniel's Single Barrel** (94 proof) and predictably, it didn't need much vermouth (4-to-1) to best frame its elegant charms. Likewise, the superbly balanced and elegant **Jefferson Reserve Very Old** (90.2 proof) was overwhelmed at 2-to-1 and showed its sophistication (and licorice) at a 4-to-1 ratio.

Despite the high proof of **Wild Turkey Rare Breed** (108.2), we found it balanced best at a 4-to-1, mainly since it's so sweet and complex—with orange peel, spice, maple and flowers—that adding too much vermouth was overkill. **Woodford Reserve Distiller's Select** (90 proof) is a classic sweet Bourbon, meeting vanilla tones with fruits like cherries, and doesn't need much vermouth to make the point. It was at its most sultry and inviting at 4-to-1.

The variables never end. Consider altering garnish (cherry or twist), vermouth (sweet and dry) and bitters. —*Jack Bettridge*

GOOD LIFE GUIDE CLASSIC

2011

With *Wine Spectator* and *Whisky Advocate* as sister publications we've sampled and featured many fine vintages and staggering drams over the years.

Despite those temptations, for this spot we chose the classic Manhattan, a favorite cocktail for cigar pairings. See a similar Martini treatment in *CIGAR AFICIONADO* December 2005.





GOOD LIFE GUIDE CLASSIC

2002

Our predilection for the game that lends itself best to smoking has brought us back to golf equipment for the Sports Good Life Guide time after time over the years. Clubs may change, but practicing your short game in the backyard is a dream that never gets old.

Backyard Putting Greens

You're skulking off the course, the laughter of your golfing buddy burning in your ears. Not because you can't grip and rip. You missed a two-foot putt. Again.

Your short game needs work. But the course is miles away, and your wife already thinks you spend too much time at the club. What you need is at-home practice. Not the cup on the living room carpet variety, but real green time. That used to mean spending a lot of time with a bent grass mower. But today's artificial-turf greens let homeowners putt away at home with virtually no maintenance on synthetic grass with a Stimp rating of 10 to 11.

Neil Robertson, the designer/builder for Prolinks Putting Greens in Wilton, Connecticut, says custom greens can be built in any shape and size that people want. Many of his jobs start by ripping out grass greens that owners want replaced.

If you're thinking a carpet and hole, think again. Greens can be designed with any variety of breaks and sways to challenge putt reading. Each hole typically has four or five cup locations.

Installation doesn't end at the green fringe. Surrounding areas where golf balls often die, short of the green, can be created.

Artificial greens can be installed in most spots, even indoors. Locations with hills require more work (and cost) for the reinforced walls that level a green and keep it from resembling a miniature golf course. Robertson says he'll install sand traps, hills, even the devilish British Open-style pot bunkers that foiled David Duvall's hopes in 2000 of a claret jug. For those blessed with estate-sized backyards, a personal par-3 hole is an option.

Becoming king of the links doesn't come cheap. Robertson's work begins at \$10,000; a lavish job can run \$100,000. Maintenance costs around \$200 a year, and Robertson's team will cut new holes (to change the angles of attack) and clean off the green, which owners are encouraged to sweep free of debris on a regular basis. Some golfers install their own turf to save money, but that would take away from practice time.

—David Savona



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Siglo Fingerprint-ID Humidor

Admit it. At one time or another, you've fantasized about being a secret agent. Whether you saw yourself as 007 or Maxwell Smart, Siglo Accessory's Biometrico fingerprint-ID humidor (\$1,257) will now grant you the sort of high-level security clearance and technology previously reserved for government operatives.

As sophisticated as the internal electronics are, you don't have to have the tech savvy of Q to operate this 100-count humidor. Simply place your finger on the reader, which is located unobtrusively on the humidor's lower right-hand corner. Once it recognizes your fingerprint, you're in like *Our Man Flint*, with unbridled access to your otherwise classified cigars. Use the wrong finger and access is denied.

Programming is equally simple. Insert Siglo's supplemental tubular key into the keyhole, turn it counterclockwise and then turn it back again until you hear a beep. The blinking LEDs will flash, prompting you to press your finger flatly over the reader. Once the sensor has successfully captured and enrolled your fingerprint into its memory, the unit beeps twice. From that point on, you become the only agent with license to smoke those precious, auction-quality purros stowed away in your humidor. That is, until the power runs low. The unit requires four AA batteries. Should they lose power, the supplemental key lets you manually unlock your box.

Like most Siglo Accessory humidors, the Biometrico's exterior gleams with 15 layers of lacquer, giving the surface a piano finish so smooth you won't be able to detect any imperfections, even in oblique lighting. Its jet-black exterior and blocky edges give it the imposing look of a safe—which is probably the point—and the solid construction give it plenty of weight.

Should there be at least one other cigar enthusiast within your circle of trust, the humidor allows you to enroll the fingerprints of 199 other agent/users as well. If any of your trusted compatriots end up as double-agents (or perhaps just as cigar mooches) you can delete their fingerprint files from the system altogether, but don't lose those supplemental keys. They're the only way to reprogram your system in case of a possible security breach or sabotage, not to mention your only instruments capable of getting you into the humidor if the system malfunctions.

While the Biometrico has no self-destruct button, you always have the option to override the fingerprint ID system completely with your keys, skipping the whole cloak-and-dagger approach to entry, but where's the intrigue in that?

—Gregory Mottola

GOOD LIFE GUIDE
CLASSIC
2014

We see many fabulous cigar accoutrements in this ever-broadening arena, but most don't change the workings of the basic tools. This piece, however, paired high tech with old school to protect your precious sticks from those with sticky fingers.



EDITOR'S NOTE



A NEW MEN'S LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

To launch a new magazine in 1992 calls for a stiff drink and a fine cigar.

I must confess at the outset, however, that the force inside me is so strong that I have abandoned conventional business wisdom. I acted solely on my publishing instinct, and the passion I hold for the subject of this new publication.

I've dreamed for more than a decade about creating a magazine for cigar lovers. But it was during a visit to Cuba in the fall of 1991, while "on assignment" to write a cover story for *The Wine Spectator*, that I realized I could wait no longer. I decided then and there to make the dream a reality.

The response to CIGAR AFICIONADO to date has been extraordinary. I had never realized that cigar lovers were so starved for information. Inside this magazine, you'll discover new facts and secrets about cigars: how they're made, who makes them and which brands are the best. In each issue we'll also report on our editors' blind taste tests which will rate cigars from around the world based on their quality.

CIGAR AFICIONADO is about taste. But it is not limited to the taste of a great smoke. This magazine intends to awaken and explore many of the pleasures that drive successful men.

Men like you want to know about great resorts for special vacations, as well as the world's best restaurants where fine food and wines are matched with well-stocked humidors. You want to understand men's drinks—Cognac, Scotch, vintage Port and fine wine. Here, you will find insights into these potions of pleasure, as well as specific recommendations unlike those found in any other magazine.

CIGAR AFICIONADO will also explore collectibles, unique trips, emerging hobbies, gambling, fashion and new ideas, in a style different, we believe, from any other men's magazine. Our editors will travel the world, making every effort possible to turn you on.

CIGAR AFICIONADO may not be for every man. But we do dream about creating a very special magazine for the individual who wants the very most out of life. If you share that desire, welcome. This magazine is for you.

Very truly yours,

Marvin R. Shanken
Editor and Publisher

CIGAR AFICIONADO • Fall 1992

4

Your Editor's Note of 1992 holds true today as it did 25 years ago.
We at Alec Bradley salute your ability to stay true to your conviction and
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Run Silent, Run Deep

Your friends all drive Hummers and fly Cessnas. How do you make amends? With the latest, greatest power toy: the personal submarine. At its smallest it's a two-seat addendum (Deep Flight Super Falcon is pictured) to your yacht that dives 40 feet and makes onboard helicopters look silly. The largest incarnation is an \$80 million, 200-foot hulk with 5,000 square feet of space that will plunge a thousand feet below the waves.

If ultimate bragging rights isn't your game and you're simply in love with the undersea world, imagine viewing it through huge portholes from the comfort of a swiveling easy chair in a custom-decorated stateroom with a fully decked-out galley not far away. (A wide range of optical equipment that will enhance your view is available for when the depths get murky.) When you want to leave the confines of your submarine and swim with the fish, a diver lockout chamber will allow that. Moreover, the advanced diving ability will take you to depths that would be impossible for a skin diver. Personal submarines can also sit atop the sea as you lounge outside on your teak deck, and then dive beneath the rolling water when the weather gets rough. (Size and amenities determine duration of dives, which vary from a couple hours to two weeks.) Some submarines are even equipped with stabilizers that will compensate for roll as waves pitch at sea level.

What you'll see at advanced depths can be astounding: myriad

shipwrecks that are otherwise unreachable, profuse coral displays and limitless undersea territory that is uncharted and essentially unknown. But that's not to say you'll be roughing it. The air-conditioned, sea-level-pressure atmosphere will have you in shirt sleeves even as the temperature plummets around you and the water pressure outside your tub becomes unbearable. The filtered air remains fresh at all times.

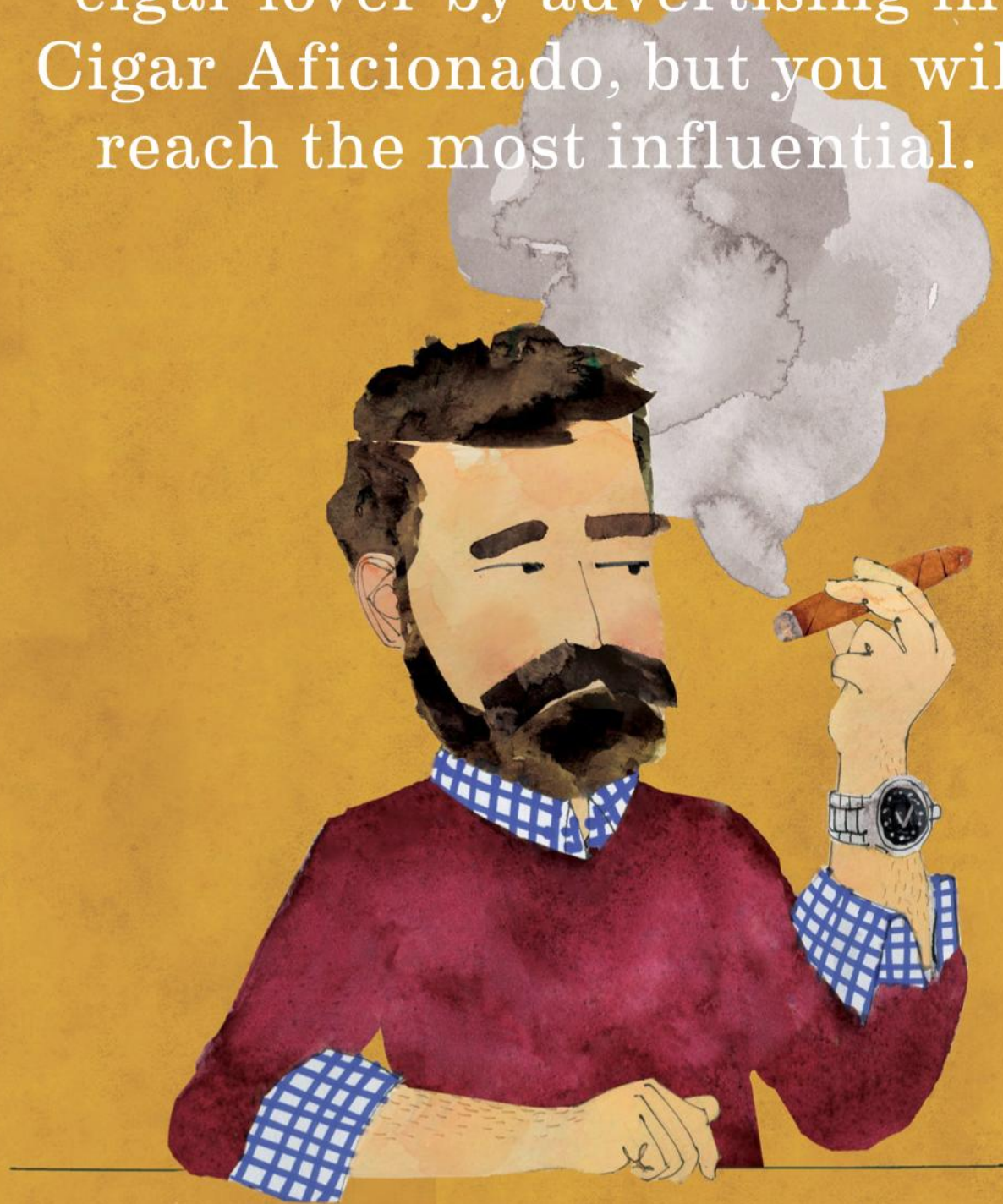
If you're not a certified U-boat commander, it's not a problem. Most sub manufacturers will supply crews or teach you how to operate your craft. The learning process, which takes about two weeks, isn't the holdup, however. Depending on the size, a custom-made submarine can take from six months to two years to be delivered. But the wait can be worth it. One Captain Nemo wanna-be, who laid out \$20 million for his bottom feeder, did it because his wife got seasick on his yacht and he needed an alternative with a smoother ride.

—Jack Bettridge

GOOD LIFE GUIDE
CLASSIC
2002

As we bounced from tactical tank experiences to Hummer camps to air-combat schools to stunt-driving tracks and even simulated rock'n'roll dreams the Fun subjects have ranged farther afield than any other Good Life section. But the one that etched itself in our psyche came early on with a personal submarine.

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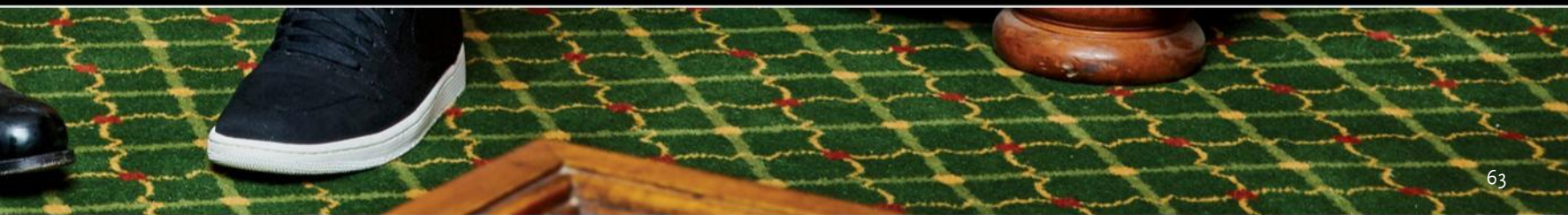




Michael Jordan

THE SEQUEL

Legend Michael Jordan sits down for a second interview with Marvin R. Shanken



No athlete in history has ever captivated audiences like Michael Jordan. He took pro basketball on his broad shoulders in the 1990s, winning six NBA championships between 1991 and 1998 with the Chicago Bulls while executing gravity defying dunks that are the stuff of legend. He retired as a player in 2003, but his star power has not waned—he's the top-ranked athlete in history by The Harris Poll, ahead of such luminaries as Babe Ruth and Muhammad Ali.

In his new life as a businessman Jordan has made one shrewd move after another. His Jordan Brand from Nike brings in more than \$3 billion in annual sales worldwide, he owns a chain of steak houses and a car dealership, and he endorses a wide range of famous brands, from Gatorade sports drinks to Hanes undergarments and Upper Deck sports memorabilia. As the owner of the Charlotte Hornets he is the only former NBA player to also be a majority team owner. But he's not stopping there. He recently joined with longtime friend and former Yankee great Derek Jeter, along with other investors, in a deal to acquire the Miami Marlins, and he will soon break ground on his own private golf club in Florida. His personal fortune has been estimated at more than \$1 billion.

Jordan is an intensely private man who gives few interviews. This summer he sat down at The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida, with CIGAR AFICIONADO editor and publisher Marvin R. Shanken for a second interview with the magazine (the first was in 2005) about his new life as a businessman, his thoughts about the state of sports, his longtime love of cigars and golf and much more. As the conversation began, Jordan was smoking a cigar.

MARVIN SHANKEN: You can put that cigar down.

MICHAEL JORDAN: Put it down? You've got something else worthwhile?

SHANKEN: When we did the first interview, you said that starting in 1993, before every home game you would smoke a Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona in your car while driving to Chicago Stadium. [Opens a box of cigars and offers one to Jordan.] And this is a Hoyo Double Corona—

JORDAN: From 1993?

SHANKEN: From '93. And whatever we don't smoke [gestures to the box of Hoyos] is yours. Part of this gift is to bring back memories.

Twenty, 30 years ago, millions of kids growing up wanted to be "like Mike," as the slogan goes. When you were growing up, who did you look up to? Who did you want to be?

JORDAN: I wasn't really into professional sports, because where I grew up [in Wilmington, North Carolina] you only had two television stations, NBC and ABC, and we couldn't even get NBA games. So most of

my focus stayed on the college game. I watched college basketball and baseball. My father was a big baseball fan; he loved Roberto Clemente. I grew up emulating his footsteps. Who he admired is who I watched. I also grew up a NASCAR fan, a Richard Petty fan. I was more into stock-car racing than I was into anything else.

SHANKEN: In late 2015, The Harris Poll

surveyed Americans to rank the most popular athletes in history. You were voted No. 1, Babe Ruth was No. 2, Muhammad Ali was No. 3. All this is wonderful. In your life, what is your greatest regret?

JORDAN: I really don't have regrets.

SHANKEN: What about your biggest disappointment?

JORDAN: Once again, that's the same analogy. To win you have to lose. To be successful you have to have something that's not successful. To be happy, you have to have disappointment. I understand the benefits and the privileges I have for being who I am.

That's one thing my parents taught me very well. Don't rub success in people's faces. So when you sit there and you say I was voted the most popular athlete, it's ironic that I'm the youngest of the three. So in essence it's all related to who is watching now. If you ask 20 years from now, I'm pretty sure LeBron [James] may beat me. If you ask me, I can never give you an opinion about things like that. As an athlete, all you ever want to do is be the best athlete that you can.

SHANKEN: I have this burning question that I think you're in a very unique position to answer. College kids can't wait to leave school to go into the pros. At age 19, when you're still a very young man, you



AUGUST 2005

DECEMBER 2017



WATCH THE VIDEO Jordan speaks about his long-time love of cigars. Visit www.cigaraficionado.com

give up your education, you give up the college experience and so forth. Upon reflection, what do you think is really the correct way—the right way—for the NBA to handle this?

JORDAN: I've been on both sides. I left school at the age of 20, 21, in my junior season. It was a business decision, an opportunity for me to play professional basketball. If a kid wants to go and work and play professional sports and earn a living, he should be allowed to.

SHANKEN: So what's in the young man's head? Is it about getting the best deal he can? Is it playing in a certain city?

JORDAN: Well, I think that's a little bit hard to determine. You want to be able to have competitive balance within the league, and if a player or individual can choose to go to whatever respective team he wants, you're going to have discrepancy in terms of the talent pool. If everyone

wants to go to Chicago—you only can have 12 jobs in Chicago—Chicago is going to get all the best players. What about Dallas? What about Washington? What about these other cities?

You're starting to see a little bit of it now, where the stars are starting to gang up and go on one team. I think it's going to hurt the overall aspect of the league from a competitive standpoint. You're going to have one or two teams that are going to be great, and another 28 teams that are going to be garbage. Or they're going to have a tough time surviving in the business environment.

SHANKEN: So what role, positive or negative, does an agent play in helping the young man make the best decisions? And I ask you that because you not only were a player, but you're an owner.

JORDAN: I think the agent's responsibility is to educate the individuals. Educate

the kids to be able to make sound decisions, from where they sit. A lot of times you have the agents making decisions based upon what they want, and sometimes it's not in the best interests of the players. And I think if you can regulate that—which is very tough—to where that athlete's going to be educated so that he can make sound decisions for himself and his family, that's the correct agenda.

I was in college for three years. Coach Smith, my parents, taught me right from wrong, taught me to understand and listen and learn, and then I got with an agent who educated me. Now I can do a lot of those things on my own. It's an education. I think that can be very helpful for the kids today. But because an agent is not that motivated, they're not teaching the kids. These kids mismanage their money and they may end up broke. Especially when you talk about the kids skipping college and going to the pros. Where are they

going to get that education? The best support system is their agent. I think that's one of the major issues. You see a lot of players who, when they retire, they have no money.

SHANKEN: In all sports.

JORDAN: In all sports. It's not just in basketball.

SHANKEN: Earlier you mentioned the competition. You now are the owner of the Charlotte Hornets. [Ed. Note: Jordan owns more than 90 percent of the team.]

JORDAN: Correct.

SHANKEN: I assume you're at a competitive disadvantage in a lot of ways. Also the audiences who watch basketball are declining—I think it peaked when you were playing. Some people say there are just too many teams, and the talent pool is diluted, and the economics favor big cities in many ways. I'm sure you didn't buy the Charlotte team to be an also-ran. You want to win the big prize. Do you have a shot? How can you develop your team to become a winner?

JORDAN: It takes a lot of work, which I'm not afraid of. It takes a lot of forward thinking. Seeing good talent. Nurturing new talent, developing new talent. One of the biggest issues we do have is we are not a Chicago, we are not an L.A., we are not a big market to where teams or players look to go. So you have to create a winning culture, and you have to connect that basketball team to the support system within the community.

One of the biggest reasons I bought the team is that initially I thought the team was under-operated because they were not connected to the community. Charlotte led the league in attendance for 10 years, which was a huge economic boon for that city, and the talent pool followed. They had good teams that went to the Eastern conference finals, they won 50 games. They had potential, and it got lost. When Charlotte moved to New Orleans, Charlotte was without a team. Then you had an owner come in who was not from North Carolina—and we're good friends, Bob Johnson and I—that disconnected itself from the community,

continued on page 68

Jordan the Businessman

Michael Jordan amassed a considerable fortune playing basketball, more than \$93 million, but it was Jordan's business acumen off the court that made him the wealthiest athlete of all time. Lucrative endorsement deals plus his partnership in the Nike-owned Jordan Brand kept the paychecks rolling in long after Jordan's retirement, and in 2015, his ownership in the Charlotte Hornets earned him a spot on *Forbes* magazine's World's Billionaires List. Here's a rundown of Jordan's current business ventures.

The Jordan Brand

The Jumpman—a minimalist silhouette of Jordan, arm extended, soaring towards the rim—is among the most widely-recognized brand logos in the world. Air Jordan sneakers, the centerpiece of Nike's Jordan Brand, have sparked an entire cultural movement in the realm of fashion and athletic wear. Self-proclaimed “sneakerheads” are known to endure long lines for the latest releases and pay exuberant amounts on the secondary market for rare limited editions. The brand continues to ink high-profile endorsement deals with NBA stars of today, producing signature sneakers for Carmelo Anthony, Chris Paul and Russell Westbrook. And the market isn't slowing down. Nike reported that the Jordan Brand grew by 13 percent in revenues in fiscal 2017, from \$2.8 billion to \$3.1 billion.

Sports Franchises

In 2006, Jordan became a minority investor in the Charlotte Bobcats NBA franchise and four years later invested more to become the new majority owner. In 2014, the Charlotte franchise changed its name back to the Hornets. Today, Jordan, a North Carolina native, owns more than 90 percent of the team thanks to additional investments. The valuation of all NBA franchises increased after the Los Angeles Clippers were sold for a record-breaking \$2 billion, and as a result, *Forbes* magazine estimated that Jordan's share of the Hornets brought his net worth north of \$1 billion. This summer, Jordan joined with longtime

friend Derek Jeter and other investors in a deal to purchase the Miami Marlins Major League Baseball team. The deal awaits final approval.

Restaurants

Jordan opened his first restaurant in 1993, working with David Zadikoff, CEO of Cornerstone Restaurant Group. Jordan and Cornerstone founded Jump Higher, a company chaired by Jordan, and Jump Higher has 10 restaurants: Michael Jordan's Steak Houses in Chicago, Connecticut and Washington state; Michael Jordan's The Steak House in New York City; Michael Jordan's Restaurant in Oak Brook, Illinois; Sol Toro and 23.sportcafe in Connecticut, and Urban Belly (two locations) and Belly Q in Chicago.

Golf Course

While Jordan's days of basking in glory on the hardwood are behind him, he's still keen on channeling his competitive prowess on the golf course, and he is planning on building his own private course in Hobe Sound, Florida.

Car Dealership

One of Jordan's earliest forays into the business world was the 1990 co-purchase of a Nissan dealership in Durham, North Carolina. While North Carolina is better known as the starting point of Jordan's legendary basketball career, Michael Jordan Nissan, which is still operating today, serves as a testament to his withstanding growth as a business mogul.

—Blake Droesch



The Jordan Brand is a fast-growing part of Nike that experienced 13 percent growth in fiscal 2017, to \$3.1 billion in worldwide revenues.



The latest Air Jordan.



Jordan in July, cutting the ribbon at his new Michael Jordan's Restaurant in Oak Brook, Illinois.



The spectacular terrace at Michael Jordan's The Steak House inside New York City's Grand Central Terminal.

continued from page 66

angered the community, to where they would not support it. The talent pool was not quite the same. The kids were getting younger and younger in drafts, and you didn't have the same talent.

When we played, the talent pool was much broader, because the kids were in college much longer. So as more players started to forgo college and go to the NBA,



the talent pool eroded as well as the education of basketball. The star players are not rushing to small markets, so I put more emphasis on draft than I used to, because you're not going to be able to get the LeBrons of the world to come to Charlotte.

SHANKEN: When you were playing for the Bulls, I'm sure it was not on your mind to one day own a team. What motivated you to own a team? No player had ever done that before.

JORDAN: I always wanted to be connected to basketball, because of my love for the game. And the best way that I think I can pass on my knowledge to tomorrow's players is through ownership. Initially, when I got out of basketball, I really didn't know what I was going to do in terms of ownership. I was presented an opportunity in Washington, from a general manager's standpoint. Ted Leonsis brought me in as part of his group. That's where I got my feet wet in terms of ownership. Being able to transition from a

basketball player who can impact a game, and determining outcome, to where you now sit up in an office without the same control, you have to be able to live vicariously through the players you select. And that's what I learned in Washington.

My first couple of years I was the general manager, and the next couple of years I went down and I played, because I still felt I could impact the game from a player's

standpoint. Not with the same magnitude as in Chicago, but from a teaching standpoint. A lot of these kids believe in leadership from a physical sense. I can show you how much hard work it takes.

SHANKEN: What I'm hearing you say is your first and greatest passion is basketball.

JORDAN: Yes. At that time. Yes.

SHANKEN: Now we're fast forwarding all these years to today, and you are a very complete businessman, with many different interests. Do you have a favorite? Do you spend more time in one business than another? Your Jordan shoe brand from Nike, I am told, does \$3 billion a year. That ain't hay.

JORDAN: [laughs] But it was a process with that as well. It's dots being connected. If you look at my portfolio, my strongest passion outside of the ownership of the Hornets is the Jordan Brand. It's not where I'm dependent on how the season ends, to determine if I have a draft

pick in the first 12 or 13 picks. The Jordan Brand is my DNA. It is who I am. The Hornets are a product of the personnel that I assemble. It's a work in progress with the Hornets. With the Jordan Brand, it is successful because I can impact it.

SHANKEN: I understand you also have a car dealership, Michael Jordan Nissan in Durham, North Carolina.

JORDAN: It was an opportunity presented to me early on, from a friend of mine in Wilmington, North Carolina. He owned car dealerships and he came to me and he said I have this opportunity—would you have an interest?

SHANKEN: What about the Michael Jordan steak house restaurants?

JORDAN: Same exact thing.

SHANKEN: But recently you've been expanding—why?

JORDAN: Because of their success. The Cornerstone guys, who I partner up with, manage the restaurants. What we have been able to do is understand what works with the consumer, and we've been able to grow that business. When I was in the NBA early on, would I have said I'd be a restaurant owner? No. Once that was presented to me, and I understood the dynamics of that business, we were able to grow that—utilizing my persona in a whole different way.

SHANKEN: Was there something about being in the restaurant business that interested you personally?

JORDAN: I love food. I love gatherings. Plus, having somewhere to go where I can control the environment is intriguing for me. Because I can let my hair down—what little hair I have—and be able to do the things I want to do. My restaurants allow me to do that. I can go in, I can get a good meal, I can bring friends, I can talk, I can drink, I can do whatever I choose to do. It's a safe haven for me, and yet at the same time it's a great business.

SHANKEN: And I assume you have no trouble getting a table.

JORDAN: No. Not that I know of.

SHANKEN: We talked, 12 years ago, about



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your love of cigars, and you also said you enjoyed wine. You sell wine in your restaurants. At home, are you a drinker or are you a collector?

JORDAN: I'm a drinker. I do collect but I don't believe in collecting and not being able to enjoy.

SHANKEN: What kind of wines do you drink at home?

JORDAN: I'm into Burgundies, Pinots right now. And I got the education in wine from Bill Terlato [CEO of Terlato Wines International], who is a good friend of mine. We spend time talking about it. At one point we were thinking about doing a wine together, but I never got to a point where I could devote the time. Because you can always put your name on something, but most of the things that I do—practically all the things that I do—are very authentic in terms of my involvement. I don't want to just lend my name to a product. Because at the end of the day, that product is always going to represent my DNA. So I like to have some interest, I like to have some input, I like to have some participation. There's nothing that goes out with my name on it that we don't oversee, we don't deal with.

SHANKEN: It seems like every time I'm at The Bear's Club I see you out there wheeling around in your golf cart with a cigar in your mouth.

JORDAN: I smoke six cigars a day maybe.

SHANKEN: Do you play golf almost every day?

JORDAN: Almost every day.

SHANKEN: And 36 holes?

JORDAN: Always 36 holes.

SHANKEN: And what's your handicap these days?

JORDAN: Four. And it's a bad four. So don't think you can take advantage.

SHANKEN: I heard it was a two.

JORDAN: No, it's a four.

SHANKEN: I'm dying to know, have you had any holes in one?

JORDAN: Two.

SHANKEN: Where?

JORDAN: At Turnberry in Miami. On No. 3, and No. 7. One I hit a seven iron, and one I hit a five wood. I've only had two. But it's enough to keep me coming back.

SHANKEN: You're friends with a lot of young pros. I'm going to mention a few, and I'd like you to give me an idea of who they are and what you think their potential is. Let's start with a new neighbor. Rory.

JORDAN: Very talented. Never played golf with him yet. I've seen him on the range: I'm a big fan. For someone that small to generate that much power? I'm

attributes and a lot of it comes from just his hard work.

SHANKEN: Justin [Thomas]?

JORDAN: Talented. I met him when he was 12 years old.

SHANKEN: Do you play with any of these guys?

JORDAN: I play with them all here. I do all I can to get their competitive nature.

SHANKEN: I know that you have, over the years, been very close with Tiger. Where do you see him today in terms of his life?



WATCH THE VIDEO Jordan weighs in on the career of Tiger Woods. Visit www.cigaraficionado.com

massive, and some of these guys are so small, and they can blow it past me. Which is somewhat frustrating.

SHANKEN: Rickie [Fowler]?

JORDAN: Rickie is coming into his own. Real talented. He is a phenomenon. He resonates with the consumer and the kids.

SHANKEN: Have you ever played with Jordan Spieth?

JORDAN: I did about four weeks ago, in Cabo. Great kid. Very polite, very talented. Grinder. If you've got a guy that has heart, that has determination, he finds a will to win. That's Jordan. He doesn't hit it long. He's a great putter. He's got a lot of

JORDAN: He's in a transitional period. We athletes, we go through that. Then we have to be adults. We have to make sound decisions, we have to make quality decisions. He is, to me, in a very unique situation. Tiger played at his peak somewhere towards the end of my career. What changed between that time frame to now? Social media, Twitter, all types of things that have invaded the personal time of individuals. I don't know if I could survive in this Twitter time. Where you don't have the privacy that you would want, and what seems to be very innocent can always be misinterpreted.

SHANKEN: Five, 10 years ago people were always asking who is greater, who is going



Jordan with his friend Derek Jeter. The two have joined in a group to acquire the Miami Marlins.

to be the greatest, Tiger or Jack? I think that conversation is pretty much over to most people now.

JORDAN: I beg to differ. First of all you're never going to say who is the greatest of all time. To me, that's more for PR and selling stories and getting hype. Jack and Tiger never played against each other, they never played in the same tournament, they never played with the same equipment, they never played the same length of golf course. I never played against Wilt Chamberlain, I never played against Jerry West. To now say that one's greater than the other is being a little bit unfair. How much impact did each change or evolve the game, Jack during his time when he played or Tiger during his time?

Obviously Jack won more during the time he played. Tiger evolved the game to where it crossed a lot of different boundaries, where it was no longer just a white guy's sport. And that grew the game from a financial standpoint. Now does that constitute him being the greatest? Does that mean he's any less than Jack? I think it's unfair. Yes, Jack has 18 majors and Tiger has 14. I won six championships. Bill Russell won 11. Does that make Bill

Russell better than me or make me better than him? No, because we played in different eras. So when you're trying to equate who is the greatest of all time, it's an unfair parallel, it's an unfair choice.

SHANKEN: I've heard that you are creating a private golf course in Florida. Can you tell me what you're doing?

JORDAN: Once I got involved in golf, I always wanted to own my own golf course. Never thought it would come to fruition. It's not about housing, it's not a pool, it's strictly golf. And golf with very limited rules. I don't like rules. If you want to play a fivesome, you play a fivesome, if you want to drive close to the green, but not on the green, you can do that. If you want to play music, play music. Very contemporary. We found some land. Right now we're just going through the permit stage.

SHANKEN: Where is it?

JORDAN: It's about 20 minutes off of 95 [in Hobe Sound, Florida]. I bought about 287 acres and we're building 18 holes, a teaching facility. Somewhere down the road hopefully we can do some cottages if we choose to do that.

SHANKEN: Who is going to design the course?

JORDAN: Bobby Weed. He's about my age, very creative mind, great conversations, great vision, and we've had countless dialogues about building a fun, links-type golf course similar to Erin Hills.

SHANKEN: You have played at hundreds of different golf courses—which are your favorites?

JORDAN: It's hard to say. I love Medinah, because of the historic aspect and being in Chicago. Augusta, without a doubt. Pebble Beach because of the scenery, but I hate the long rounds. Diamond Creek, right outside of Asheville, North Carolina. If I had to pick a golf course that I could play every single day and have a chance of shooting a decent number in the best conditions, I would say Diamond Creek would be one. I play from the backs. If I play from the backs I can have fun.

SHANKEN: What about internationally?

JORDAN: I've played in Scotland. Royal County Downs [in Ireland] I love. Druids Glen in Ireland. They're supposed to be the Augusta National of Ireland.

SHANKEN: Let's talk about Derek Jeter.

JORDAN: He's like my little brother. We hang out a lot.

SHANKEN: And then a few weeks ago I saw your name mentioned as an investor in the Miami Marlins with Jeter. What motivated that? Was it strictly friendship or business?

JORDAN: Both. I love baseball. And it's not final, they have to go through the approval state of his ownership. And when he came to me about getting involved I said "I'll support you in whatever way." I think he's motivated to build a baseball franchise that can be successful. That is who he is. That's the way he's lived his life. Everything that I've tried to do from a basketball standpoint, he's trying to do from a baseball standpoint. I think he's going to do a great job. I think he's going to roll up his sleeves, he's going to dive in, he's going to try to do the best he can in terms of reconnecting it back to the city of Miami. I don't know how

continued on page 78

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Career Highlights

- 🏀 Six World Championships: 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1998, including two “three-peats,” all with the Chicago Bulls
- 🏀 Member of the Basketball Hall of Fame (inducted 2009)
- 🏀 Six-time NBA Finals MVP
- 🏀 Five-time NBA regular season MVP
- 🏀 10-time NBA season scoring leader
- 🏀 14-time All-Star
- 🏀 Three-time All-Star Game MVP (1988, 1996, 1998)
- 🏀 Rookie of the Year (1985)
- 🏀 First in career per-game average: 30.12 points per game
- 🏀 First in career playoffs average: 33.45 points per game
- 🏀 Third in steals: 2,514
- 🏀 Second in playoffs points scored: 5,987
- 🏀 Fourth in all-time points scored (regular season): 32,292
- 🏀 Most points, single playoff year: 759 (1992)
- 🏀 Highest points average, single playoff year: 43.67 per game average (1986)
- 🏀 Most points ever scored, playoff game: 63 (April 20, 1986 vs. Boston Celtics)
- 🏀 60 points or more scored in a single game: five times



Air Jordan takes flight in 1992, one of his six championship seasons.

Jordan the Basketball Star

Sports fans will never forget that first time they saw it: The tall, muscular athlete driving down the court, tongue sticking out from his mouth, eyes furrowed with determination. And then came the leap, the body soaring higher than a human should be able to fly, before the thunderous dunk. There was no sight quite as exciting as Michael Jordan on the attack.

Jordan's abilities as a basketball player energized the sport, making basketball fans out of those who never watched the game. He was brilliant on offense, leading the league in scoring 10 times,

taking his Chicago Bulls to six championships (two “three-peats”) and being named to the NBA All-Star team 14 times. Like all great champions, he was better in the postseason than in the regular season, upping his already impressive 30 points per game average by more than three points in the playoffs, both of them ranking best of all time. While his drives to the basket made the clips on SportsCenter, he was a complete player and had a killer instinct on defense, ranking third all time in steals.

—David Savona



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Don Pepín García
FAMILY

continued from page 72

I can be a part of it, but I am a part of it from afar and from a support standpoint. But I love the game of baseball.

SHANKEN: In some ways you are now on almost identical paths, as owners with a team that needs to step up its game.

JORDAN: Yes, and the thing that I can provide for him is to lend advice and to give him some insights as to what we did in Charlotte and to reconnect and to turn things around to where it's a more successful franchise.

SHANKEN: You talk about teaching. Have you ever been a coach?

JORDAN: No.

SHANKEN: Did you ever want to be a coach?

JORDAN: No. I have no patience for coaching. My biggest problem from a competitive standpoint is the focus of today's athlete. For me to ask an individual to focus on the game the way I played would, in some ways, be unfair. And if he didn't do it, there's no telling where my emotions would be. I don't think I would have the patience for it. Coaching is not something I ever thought I could do from an emotional standpoint, because I have a different perception than the kids of today.

SHANKEN: You said you smoke six cigars a day. What do you like to smoke?

JORDAN: Partagás Lusitanias are my favorite.

SHANKEN: So you like a big cigar.

JORDAN: I like a big cigar, but I can smoke a smaller cigar, too. I like variety. I like to experiment on different levels of cigars.

SHANKEN: [Reaches for a second box of cigars on the table.] Why don't we go—

JORDAN: [Holding the Hoyo.] I'm not giving this up.

SHANKEN: I don't want to end the interview without having this cigar. [He points at a second box of cigars on the table.]

JORDAN: I was hoping you'd forget. So there's more for me.

SHANKEN: I don't open these that often. I also brought you a rare box. This is a pre-Castro Cuban. [Opens a box of H. Upmann Tivolis from the 1950s and the men begin smoking the cigars.]

JORDAN: Have you ever been to Cuba?

SHANKEN: Yes. Many times. Actually, I started going there in 1991 to do a cover story for *The Wine Spectator* on Cuban cigars. I had no idea when I went there I was going to create a cigar magazine. After I went to Cuba I decided I didn't want to die without having a cigar magazine.

JORDAN: That's my dream trip.

SHANKEN: I have another quote here from our last interview: "My biggest dream is to visit Cuba and visit some of the cigar factories. Obviously with the embargo it's a little difficult."

JORDAN: Yes.

SHANKEN: Well, you can go now.

JORDAN: I could. I want to go with no restraints. If I go right now, you still have restraints, politically as well as a lot of other things. My wife is Cuban. Her family has a lot of memories about Cuba, so in essence she wants to go, which I think is a motivational factor. She wants to go for different reasons. I want to go for particular reasons, obviously. In terms of us being able to go, it's coming. It's just a matter of time.

SHANKEN: You would be so unbelievably

welcomed in Cuba by the Cuban people and the Cuban government. It would have an enormous impact on how they felt about their own self-esteem.

JORDAN: Really?

SHANKEN: Yes.

JORDAN: I never looked at it that way. I looked at it from a selfish standpoint. I think it's a very rich country in terms of heritage. I wish I could buy one of those old cars and ship it over here. I talk to my father-in-law about that all the time. I also want to go because I'm such a fan of cigars.

SHANKEN: Well, if you went into a cigar factory all the cigar rollers would stop their work and they would give you a welcome that would give you goose bumps.

JORDAN: But I don't want them to stop, I want to see what they do.

SHANKEN: Well don't worry, they will continue rolling cigars after the welcome. Have you been to a cigar factory anywhere else?

JORDAN: Never have.

SHANKEN: Let me ask you about a film project. What is this eight- or 10-part documentary?

JORDAN: [laughs] You're very knowledgeable about things you're not supposed to be knowledgeable about. Our last year [with the Bulls] in 1998, we had a camera crew following us for the whole time, to



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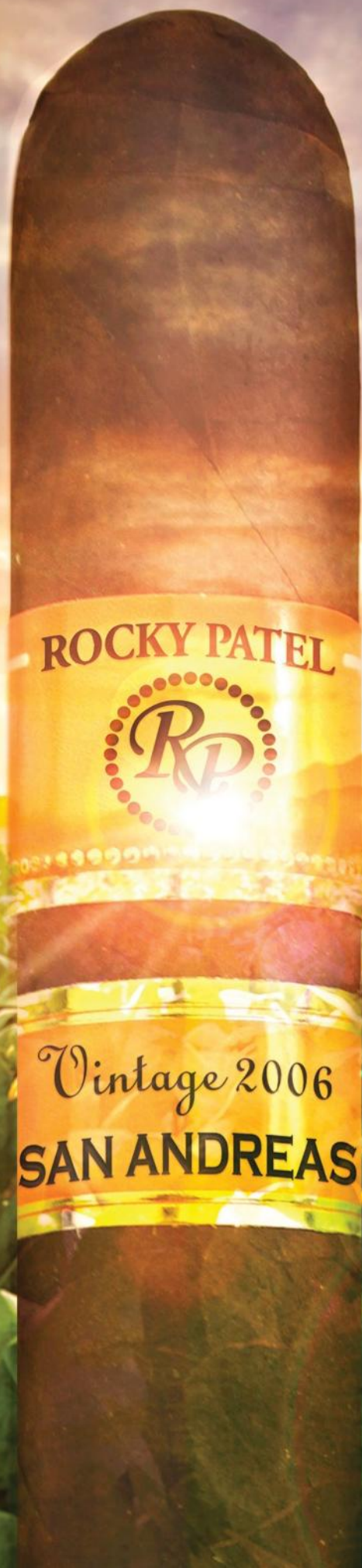


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capture the last dance. Because everybody felt the team was going to be dismantled. And what you will see in that footage is my dedication to the game of basketball. Unwavering dedication, day in and day out. And being the leader of the team, I hold everyone else accountable for the success. They're going to get an honest understanding for what winning is about. What leadership is about.

SHANKEN: Is the documentary finished?

JORDAN: No.

SHANKEN: Have you seen a lot of it?

JORDAN: Yeah, I've seen it.

SHANKEN: So it's been through an editing process.

JORDAN: No, it has not gone through a true editing process. My agent and my people who have been working with me, have been pushing for me to do it. I have no problems with people seeing it, as long as they understand the passion, because it's a strong passion and it's very raw.

SHANKEN: I think it's a wonderful way to go public and share with people just what you were like.

JORDAN: If you love something, and your agenda is to win, it's a certain price you have to pay.

SHANKEN: Here's where I'm going. You, 20 years ago, represented values that you had that many athletes today don't even understand, let alone possess. So it could be a good teaching experience for all these young athletes who think everything is owed to them.

JORDAN: If it's perceived properly. This is a very critiquing period of this world. We're going to try to make sure the intent is perceived the right way. I'm not worried about that. At the end of the day my heart, my soul, my dedication is in the right place.

SHANKEN: You are recognized in the business press—I hate to even use the word, I apologize for using the word—as a billionaire.

JORDAN: Me? Hmm. What does that mean?



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SHANKEN: What does it mean?

JORDAN: I don't think it changes anything. Other than that people can call on me and ask me for money maybe. [laughing]

SHANKEN: If your dad were alive he'd be so proud of you.

JORDAN: What would my father do right now? First of all he'd probably be sitting here smoking a cigar. The thing I remember the most about my father—and I had him for 32 years—I never look at it from a negative sense. Obviously he was murdered and rarely do I get the chance to talk about him. I think about him practically every day. For a person like myself who lives in the spotlight, the thing that he's always said is take a pause before you

make a decision, and say “what if.” Whatever decision you're going to make will have consequences. Pros and cons.

SHANKEN: You obviously listened to your father, because in the very beginning you spoke about being humble, not shouting about who you are and what you've done and just being within yourself. A lot of kids growing up because of their parents may start that way, but not end up that way. You ended up that way.

JORDAN: It's not just because of my father. My mother calls me practically every day, reiterating “keep your nose clean.” That's her constant reminder that people are watching, people are learning, people are paying attention. The news that sells today is negative news.

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SHANKEN: That's all the reporters want.

JORDAN: Not that I live in a box, where I'm afraid to do things. Some people may view some of my decisions to be not the right ones. Everybody says it was a failed opportunity for me to play baseball. For me it was the best thing to happen to me, because it allowed me to go back to the game [of basketball] with a stronger passion. At the same time I was able to understand the love that these minor league baseball players have making \$1,500 a month. That helped me put things in perspective. When I went back to [basketball] I appreciated it even more. So when we won those championships [in 1996, 1997 and 1998] those things mattered to me far more than what I did in '91, '92 and '93. People don't see that. All they think about is he batted .202, and he struck out a certain number of times. Yeah, OK. But the effort was there and the learning curve and the passion was there. That's what my father and my mother instilled in me. Take a negative and turn it into a positive. Don't be afraid to fail.

SHANKEN: This is a very serious conversation, but what I really want to ask you now, is while you've been talking you've been smoking a pre-Castro Cuban cigar. How's it taste? [smiling]

JORDAN: Great. Absolutely great.

SHANKEN: Other than playing golf with me again, and going to Cuba, what's on your bucket list?

JORDAN: Winning a championship in Charlotte.

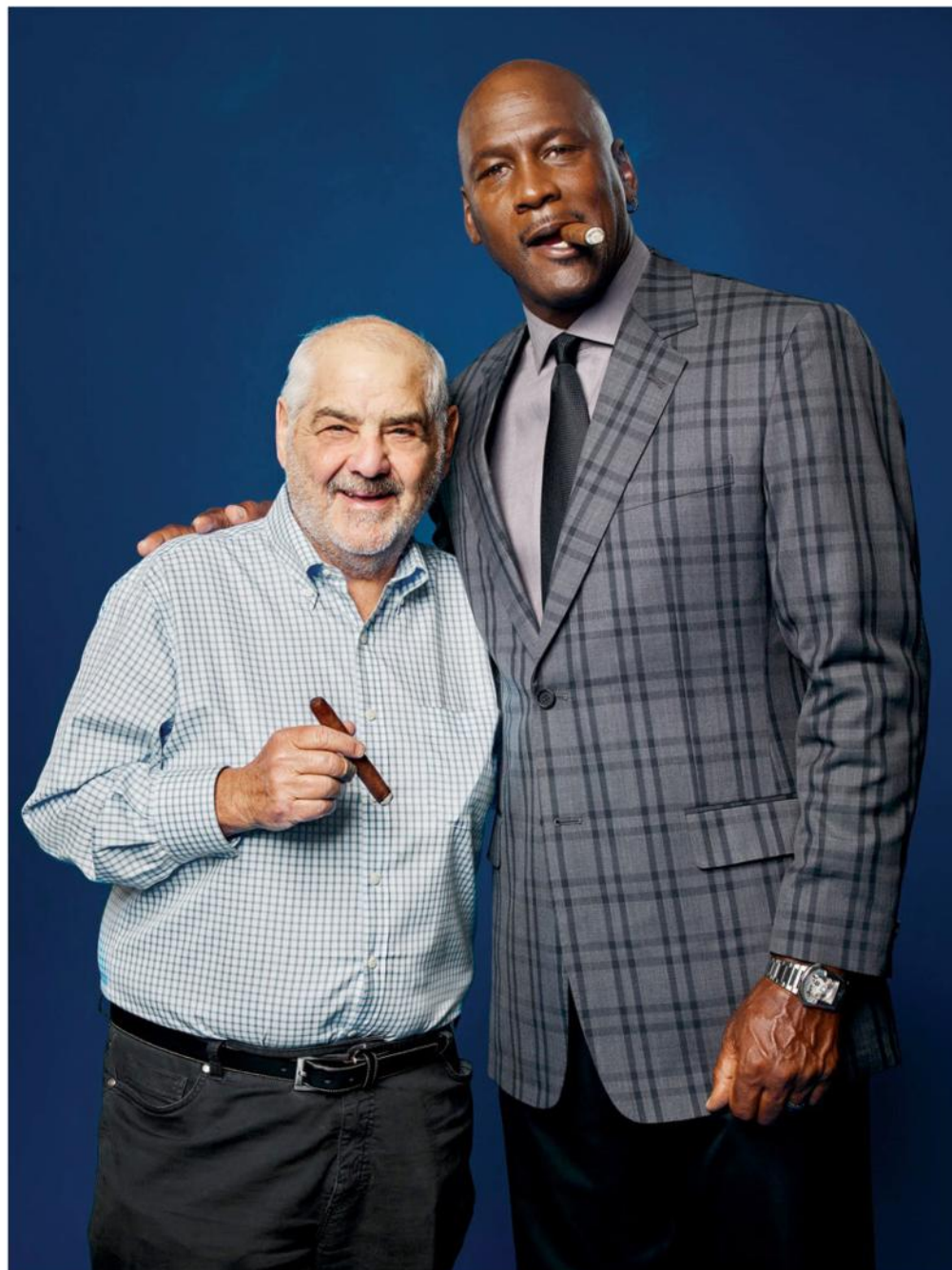
SHANKEN: Bravo.

JORDAN: That, to me, is huge. I think the city deserves it. It's gone through a lot.

Me personally, like any father I just want to see my kids successful. I've gone through so many good things, there's been very few bad things, but bad things make you better.

SHANKEN: Why do you do so few interviews, hardly any, and why have you agreed to give us a second one?

JORDAN: Part of the reason I kind of toned back is I want my life to be my life. I don't want to sit here and constantly



reiterate things that I've said a countless number of times. At the end of the day, my time in the spotlight is dwindling. And I want to be able to control what I do and what I don't want to do. Someone else needs to step into the limelight. Me, I don't need more admiration. I've had enough. It's been great.

I'm still going to be a very positive force within the community, with the kids of tomorrow, but I've got my own kids. I have my own wife. I'm 54 years old. I want to be able to go through a week not worrying about what I have to do on Wednesday, and what I have to do on Thursday. And

sometimes I surprise myself because I find I've got nothing to do today. Or I have nothing to do tomorrow. That's, to me, ultimately retirement.

SHANKEN: At my age I probably work too hard. So all I can say to you is: I want to be like Mike. ❖

MICHAEL JORDAN: THE VIDEOS

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Words of Wisdom

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"I feel sometimes that smoking is, believe it or not, more of a private affair. It's something that I look forward to, that I covet. Therefore I will purposely deny myself several cigars during the day so that I look forward to that evening cigar with greater relish."

—SYLVESTER STALLONE, APRIL 1998

"I was spectacularly good in that scene. It's not because people saw up my dress. If they only saw up my dress, they wouldn't remember the character's name. It's been a decade, and everyone remembers her name."

—SHARON STONE, AUGUST 2004





“Everything I do, I enjoy. I go to China to work in a movie one day, to New York to present an award the next. I go to a few business meetings where I get together with friends and talk about how to make one dollar into many dollars. It’s fun. Why would I retire from that?”
—ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, FEBRUARY 2017

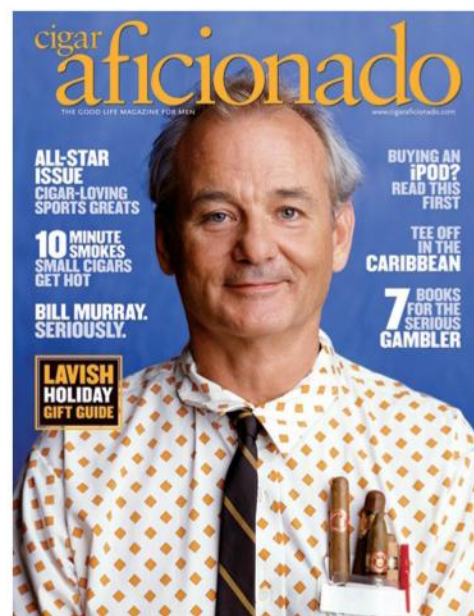
“Cigars are just a tremendous addition to the enjoyment of life.”

—RUSH LIMBAUGH, SPRING 1994



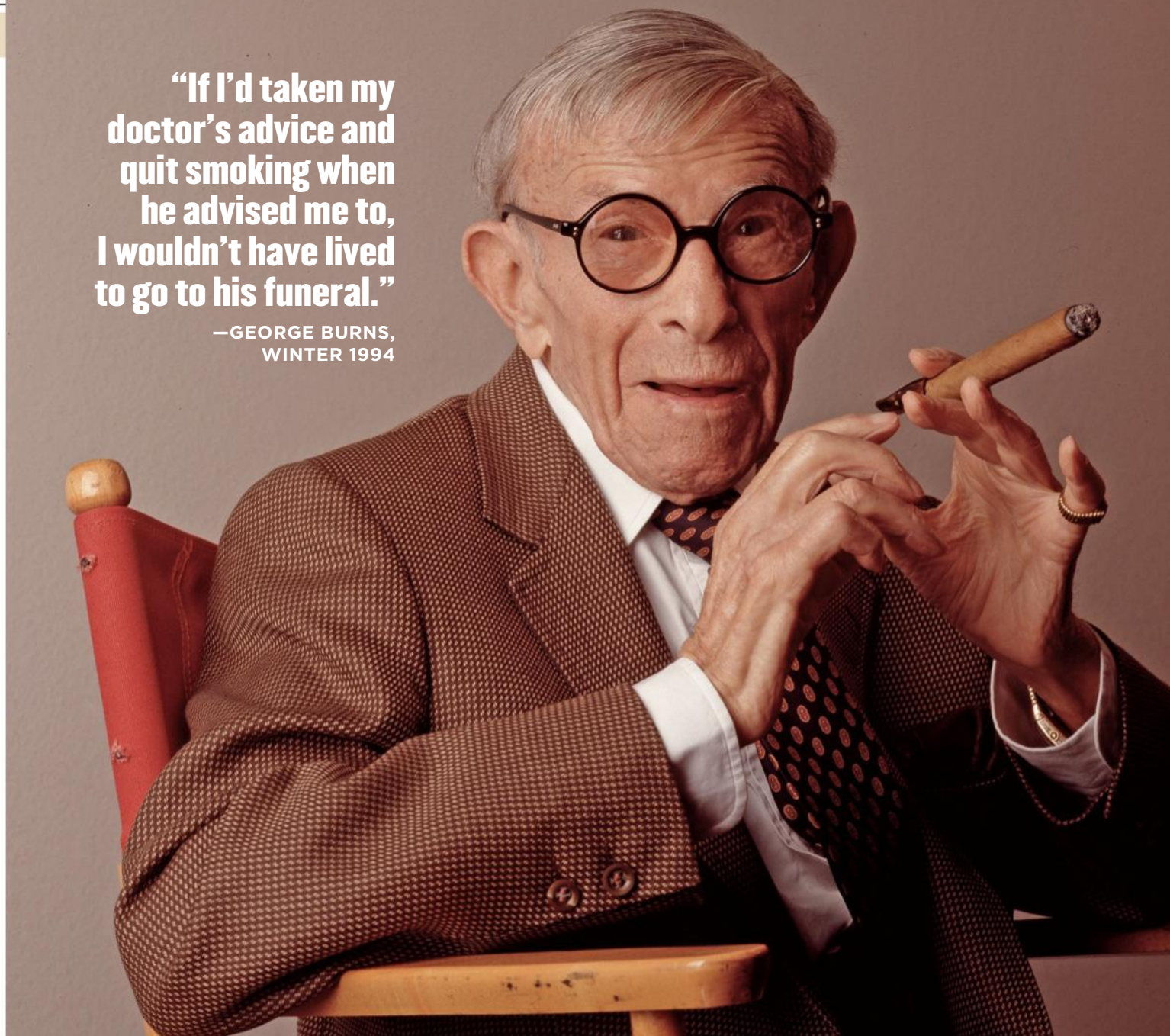
“My favorite cigar is whichever one my friend is smoking, because I’ll always ask ‘I got some cigars. Which one would you like to smoke?’ To me, it’s something you do with someone. To me, it’s not important that I smoke a cigar so long as someone does.”

—BILL MURRAY, DECEMBER 2004



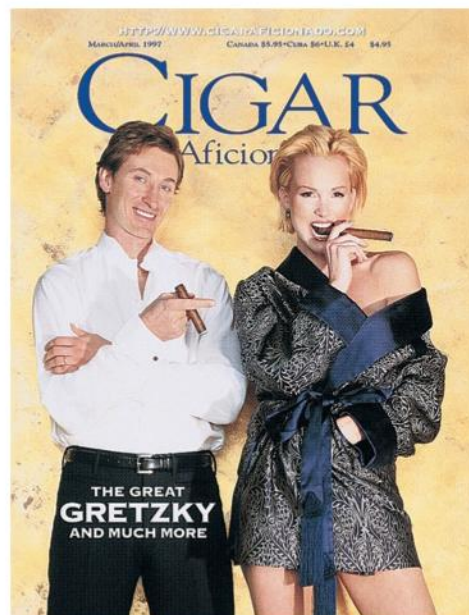
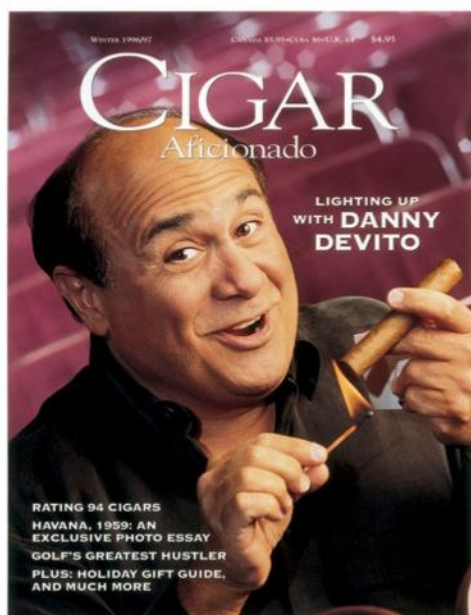
**"If I'd taken my
doctor's advice and
quit smoking when
he advised me to,
I wouldn't have lived
to go to his funeral."**

—GEORGE BURNS,
WINTER 1994



**"Hollywood
is a jungle.
It's full of
quicksand,
vermin and
flesh-eating
beasts."**

—DANNY DEVITO,
WINTER 1996/97

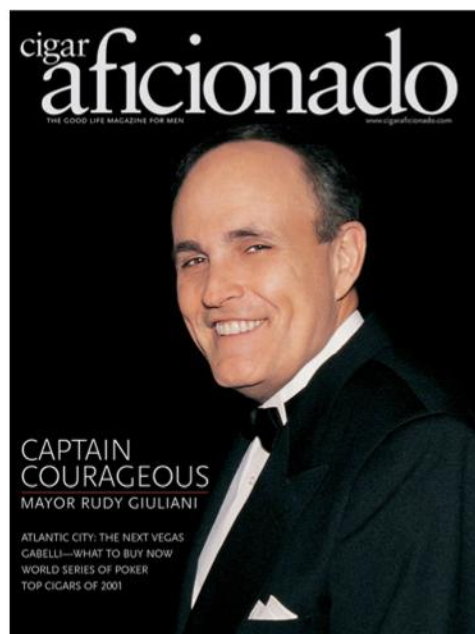


**"Great athletes
have a fear of not
wanting to be a
failure. I know
myself that I have
this fear that
drives me. I don't
want to embarrass
myself. You don't
want to be not
successful."**

—WAYNE
GRETZKY,
APRIL 1997

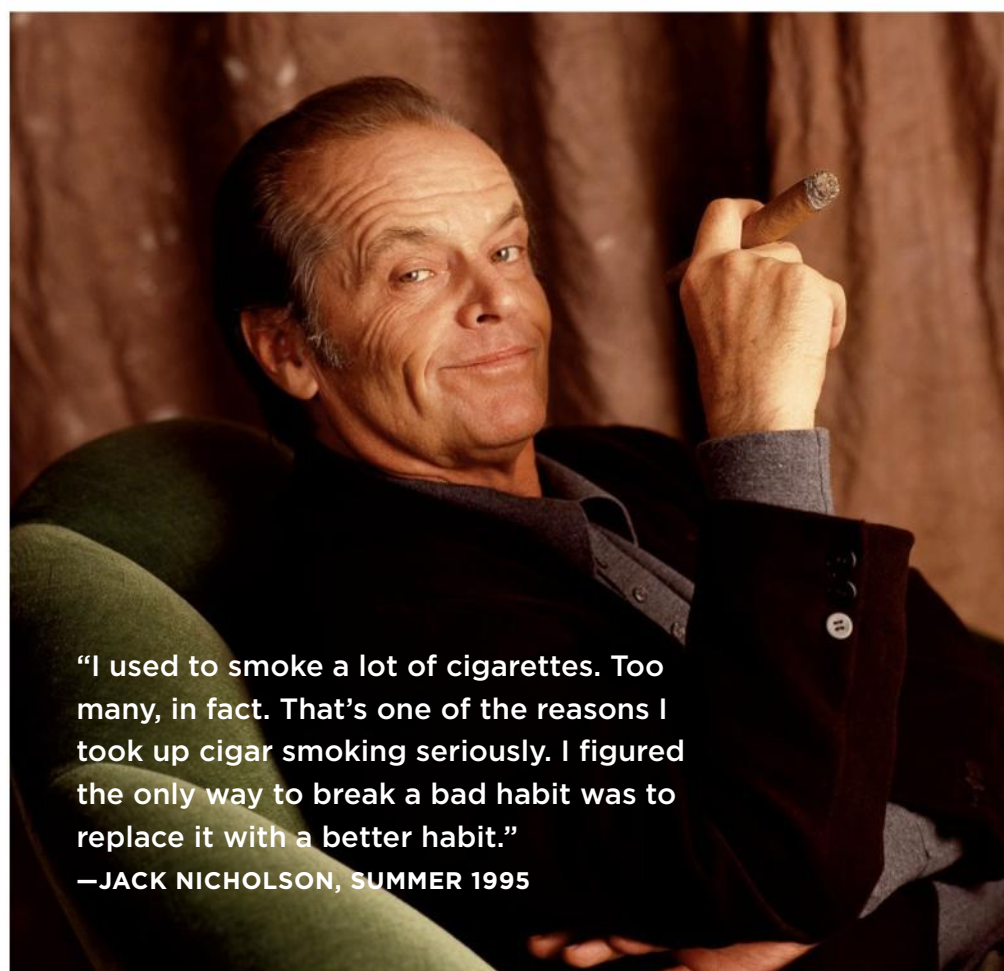
“Life is risky. You can decide to live your life afraid of that happening, or you can decide to live your life the way Americans live their lives, which is unafraid.”

—RUDOLPH W. GIULIANI, DECEMBER 2001



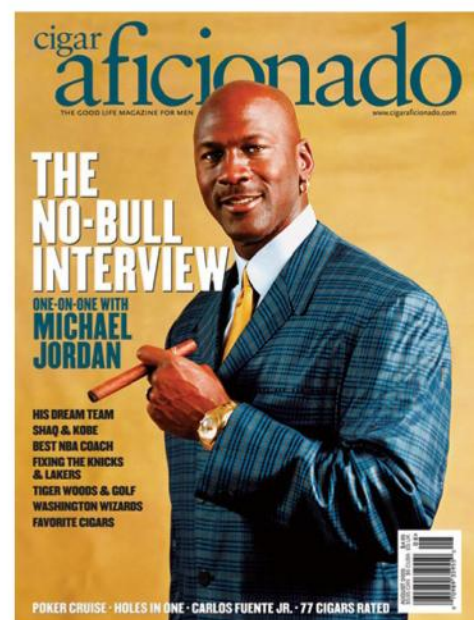
“I’m too young to consider myself a connoisseur. I just enjoy smoking cigars.”

—USHER, OCTOBER 2014



“I used to smoke a lot of cigarettes. Too many, in fact. That’s one of the reasons I took up cigar smoking seriously. I figured the only way to break a bad habit was to replace it with a better habit.”

—JACK NICHOLSON, SUMMER 1995



“I started smoking a cigar going to the games in 1993. It became a ritual for every home game. Each and every day for a home game, I smoked a cigar. I wanted that feeling of success, and relaxation.”

—MICHAEL JORDAN, AUGUST 2005



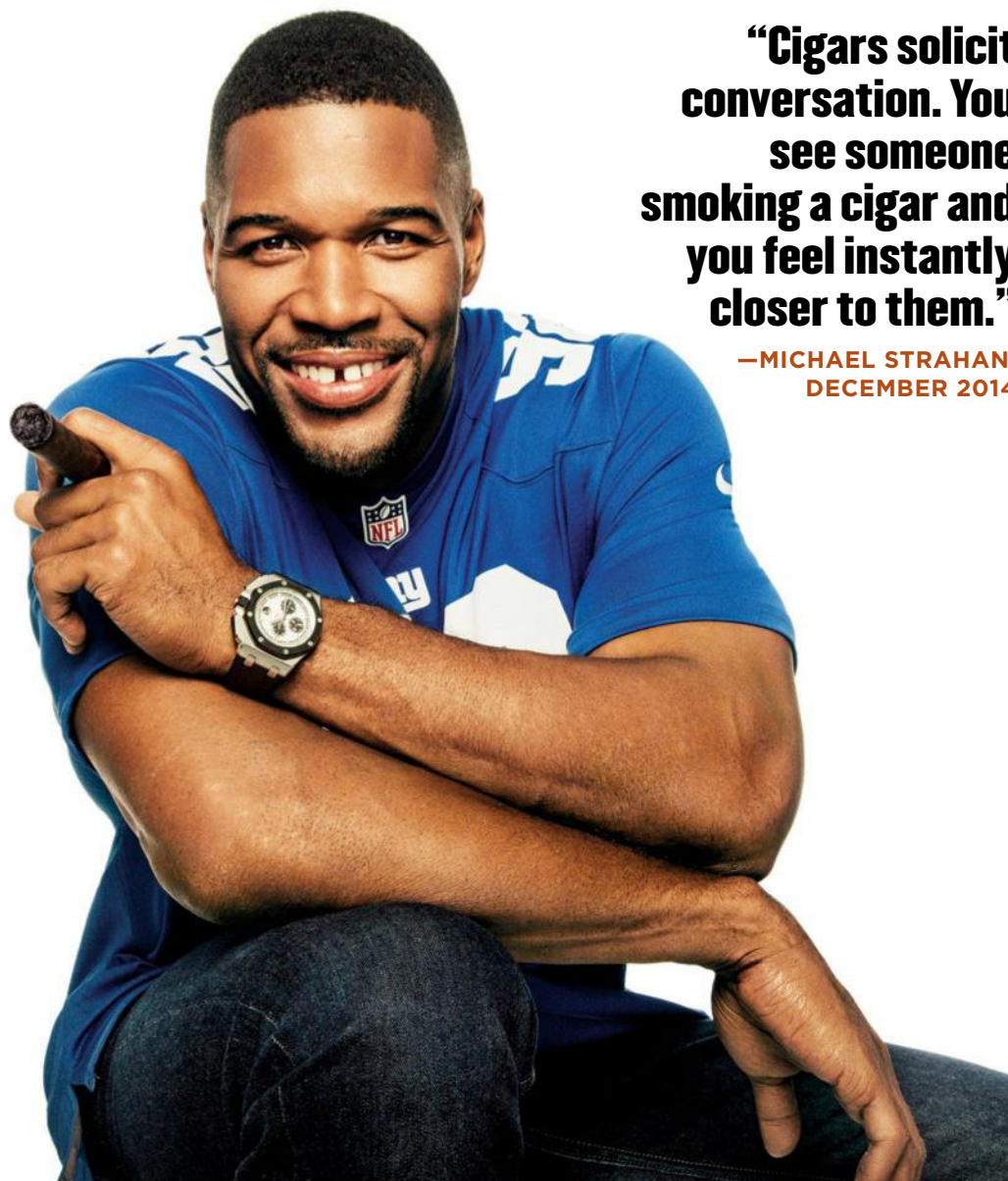
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“Cigars solicit conversation. You see someone smoking a cigar and you feel instantly closer to them.”

—MICHAEL STRAHAN,
DECEMBER 2014

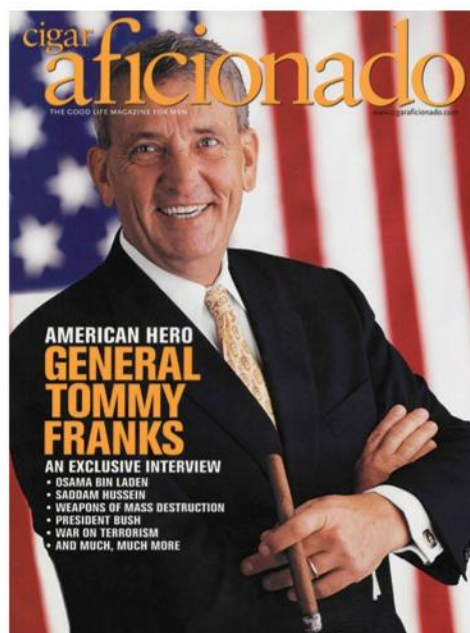


“You always think that you’re going to avoid a midlife crisis. But it just sneaks up and gets you no matter what. I had mine with a lot of help from my second ex-wife. She was really kind of a ship passing in the night; she just turned out to be the Exxon Valdez.”

—JAMES WOODS, JUNE 1997

“9/11 brought all of our history right in front of us...things like liberty; things like freedom; the ability for you, for your family, to be able to go to a mall anywhere in this country, sit in one of the movie theaters that exist in that mall; get on a jet, fly someplace around the world. Do whatever you want. The events of 9/11 impacted the way we live and I think it’s healthy for us to think about that.”

—GEN. TOMMY FRANKS,
DECEMBER 2003

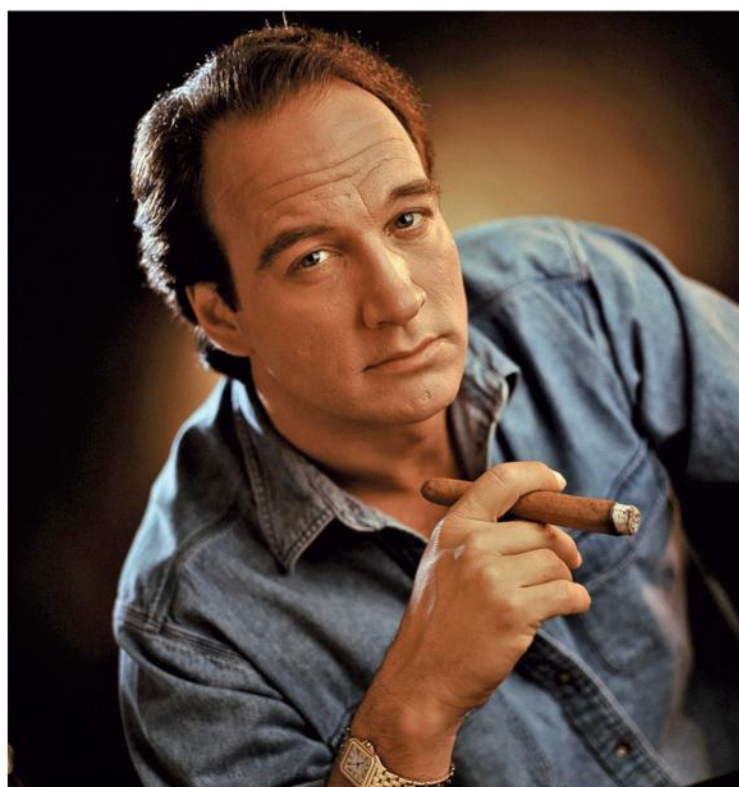
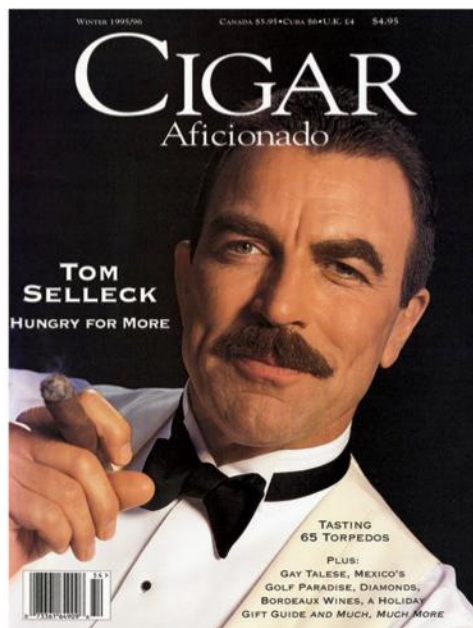


“I enjoy the smell of a good cigar. It relaxes me. It’s a great social activity, because there’s something about smoking a cigar that feels like a celebration.”

—DEMI MOORE, AUTUMN 1996

“The ‘60s child in me just loves the fact that I’m fighting against the trend. There are a lot of things about cigars I love because of the anarchist in me. A lot of people are doing that. The cigar business is booming, and it’s lovely in that sense.”

—TOM SELLECK, WINTER 1996



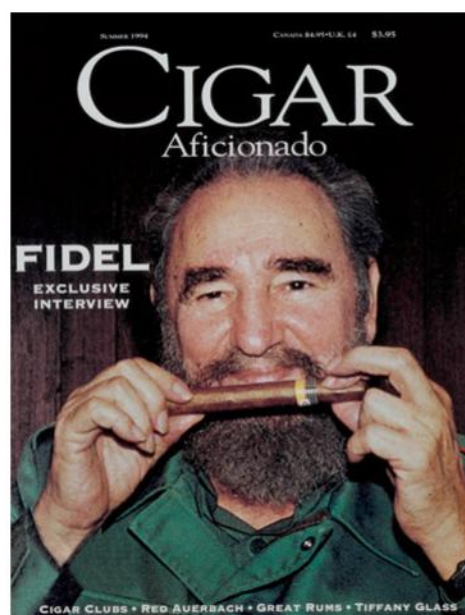
“What I really like is playing low-status characters, like the guys in *Salvador* or *About Last Night*. I want to play darker stuff, street stuff. I want to be able to be who I am. I swear; I smoke. That’s who I am, and those are the roles I like.”

—JIM BELUSHI, SPRING 1994



“I tell my sons all the time—I’m never concerned about you, I’m concerned about the people and the company you keep.”

—RAY LEWIS, OCTOBER, 2016



“Sometimes I used to dream that I was smoking a cigar...I was conscious that I had not permitted myself to smoke anymore, but I was still enjoying it in my sleep.”

—FIDEL CASTRO, SUMMER 1994

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AGED 12 YEARS



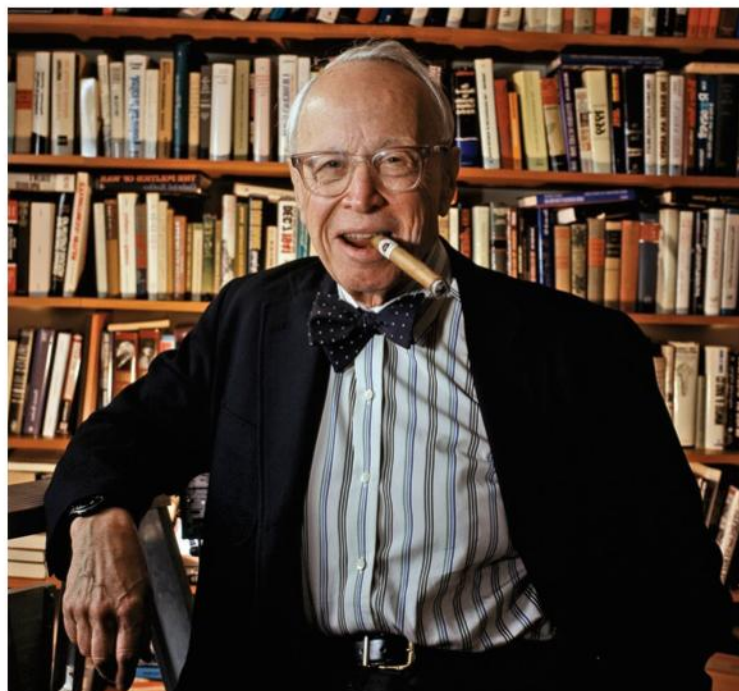
“Sometimes when we do so much work each day, you just have to find a way to concentrate on every scene and think about exactly what you’re doing. And sometimes a small amount of pain will wake you up.”

—JAMES GANDOLFINI, APRIL 2001



“I’m not going to hide out in some back room and tell the world I don’t smoke cigars.”

—CHUCK NORRIS, AUGUST 1998



“[Kennedy] liked a cigar in a proper setting. He liked a cigar after dinner. Sometimes he would smoke a cigar at the end of the afternoon, but he wasn’t a compulsive smoker. Unfortunately, just as my taste began to develop for Havana cigars, we imposed the embargo.”

—ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, AUTUMN 1995

“I don’t buy into astrology or anything like that and you know why? Because I think the most boring thing in the world would be to know what’s going to happen next.”

—JOE MANTEGNA, AUGUST 2011





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25th

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Before *Cigar Aficionado*

*The events that led to the creation of
Cigar Aficionado in 1992* BY DAVID SAVONA

Officially it's our 25th anniversary, but CIGAR AFICIONADO's gestation goes back much further. Before Marvin R. Shanken created the magazine, he was a cigar-smoking publisher with a penchant for fine cigars that began in his college days. In the early 1980s, roughly a decade before the first issue of the magazine, Shanken began to write about cigars in *The Wine Spectator*, a publication he bought in 1979.

The first cigar column, which was published in February, 1984, was entitled "I Love a Good Smoke." In the piece, Shanken told the world about his affinity for cigars, which was a big deal given that cigar smoking in the 1980s was not as accepted as it would become a decade later.

"I smoke two to three cigars each working day," Shanken wrote in a piece that spanned two columns of

Marvin R. Shanken traveled to Cuba in 1991 to report on cigars for the February 15, 1992 *Wine Spectator*. On the plane ride home, he vowed to create his own cigar magazine.



WINE SPECTATOR FEB 1-15 1984

23

FROM THE EDITOR

Marvin Shanken



I Love a Good Smoke . . .

In fact, I smoke two to three cigars each working day. Why? It relaxes me and I like the taste. And so, when I read in *The New York Times* about an auction of vintage Cuban cigars, you could bet I would be there. It happened on a Friday night in December at the 7th Regiment Armory at Park Avenue and 67th Street in New York.

SMOKE FILLED THE ROOM

When I arrived, I was not sure if I had stepped onto a film set for "Casablanca" or a private gambling casino in London. The room was filled with low-hanging clouds of smoke. There were 300 to 400 men there, most with serious, if not down-right stern looks on their faces. Many wore tuxedos. I knew at once that this evening would be memorable.

171,000 CUBAN CIGARS

At the front of the huge mahogany-paneled room with 30-foot ceilings, rested rows, six feet high, of cedar-boxed cigars for review. Bidders filed by solemnly, staring, some reaching out to touch, as though this were the funeral procession for some exalted religious leader. No smiles, no conversation. To the serious cigar aficionado, this was a moment in history.

For the past 22 years, Americans have been denied the right to purchase Cuban cigars in the United States—all part of the legendary embargo placed on Cuban products in 1961. The Cuban cigars being auctioned this night were all produced in 1958, before Castro's power and before the legendary craftsmen had fled to other Caribbean islands to piece back together their families, trade and traditions.

A CUBAN CIGAR AUCTION? NO WAY!

The auction, sponsored by a relatively new auction house, Guernsey's, was the brainchild of tobacco merchant and entrepreneur Lew Rothman. In 12 years, Rothman has built one of the leading import/retail cigar and pipe tobacco outlets in the United States with stores in major cities in the east. His business, J.R. Tobacco, he confesses, had sales well in excess of \$20 million in 1983.

According to Rothman he was approached a year and a half ago by a Spaniard who claimed to have inherited a cache of Cuban cigars. They had been held for the past 20

years in a temperature-controlled warehouse in Spain. The man wished to sell the cigars to Rothman. Rothman did not believe that U.S. laws would permit their importation or sale and told the man so. But he added, "You get approval from U.S. customs and I'm your man." Seven months later the deal was consummated. Rothman bought the entire inventory of 185,000 cigars "sight unseen" and "on an as-is basis." Upon inspection after their arrival in New York more than 10,000 cigars had to be dumped.

The rationale behind permission to import the Cuban cigars here was based on the premise that since the business transaction regarding these cigars had taken place prior to the Castro regime—the cigars were exported from Cuba in 1959—the embargo should not apply. It was also argued that the embargo was designed to prohibit U.S. dollars from going to the Cuban government.

\$84 A CIGAR IS CRAZY!

As the hammer sounded, announcing the auction was about to start, floodlights from CBS, NBC, and ABC lit up the room. As in too many wine auctions I've attended, drama and emotion were at a fever pitch. The first sale was to be a single box of 25 *Loyas* (5 1/2" by 44" ring size) produced by the famed old Cuban cigar firm *Habano* Farach. Bidding started at \$250 for the lot. Within seconds the bidding had reached \$1,000. The crowd of raised hands began to thin. By \$1,400, there were two bidders left. The final winning bid was \$2,100, well in excess of any realistic value for the box. Obviously, the bidder was after the publicity value—which he got, as all three local newscasts covered the event. Total sales for the evening hit \$220,000.

TOO MUCH AUCTION HYPE

Sadly, for the first 15 or 20 lots, prices remained insanely high. Then the camera lights went out, and with it went the Hollywood hype. For the patient, more serious bidder interested in adding Cuban cigars to his humidor, the door to heaven was opened and patience was rewarded. I was able to acquire a good-sized lot of *Palmeras* at a fraction of the \$84-per-cigar price paid by early evening bidders.

Spectator. "Why? It relaxes me and I like the taste." The article also covered a New York City auction at which Shanken acquired a large number of pre-Castro Cuban cigars.

Shanken wrote "three or four" cigar-related pieces for *Wine Spectator* in the 1980s, and while he enjoyed them his editors felt they were out of place. "They suggested that I shouldn't be writing about cigars in a wine magazine," Shanken says. Several years later, during an editorial meeting at the Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach, California, Shanken was pressing his editors for new cover ideas for *Wine Spectator*, more life-style features that covered more than wine. One of the editors suggested cigars, and a cover story on the subject written by Shanken himself. Shanken originally was against the idea.

"They started pounding the table and chanting 'cover!' 'cover!'"

Birth of an Idea

Marvin Shanken's love of cigars goes back well before the magazine's founding. In this 1984 *Wine Spectator* column, he coined the phrase "cigar aficionado." Eight years later in 1992, the magazine premiered.

Shanken says. That led to a trip to Cuba in September of 1991 to research a cover story for *Wine Spectator* called "The Allure of Cuban Cigars." The visit would have far-reaching repercussions.

"The trip... was a cigar lover's dream. For most of my adult life, I have been a serious cigar smoker," Shanken wrote in his Editor's Note from that issue, dated February 15, 1992. "Visiting Cuba was a fascinating experience—every day brought new highs."

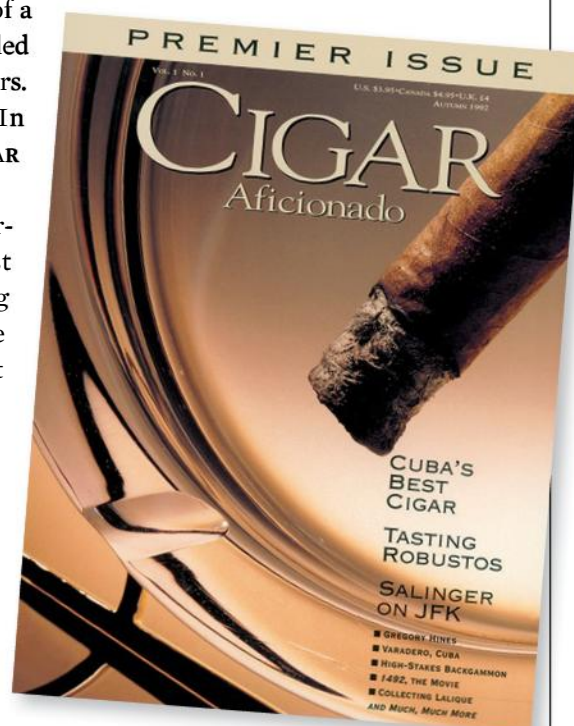
On his return Shanken decided that the cover story would not be enough. On the way back, while still in the air, he made a vow. "I said to myself, 'I don't want to die without having a cigar magazine.'"

Back at his office in New York, Shanken gathered his senior executives to reveal his plan to create a cigar magazine. "Every single one of them told me it was a bad idea. Not to do it," Shanken said in 2012.

He ignored the advice. Stitched inside that February 1992 issue of *Wine Spectator* was a card that read: "Announcing a new magazine for cigar lovers." It had a photo of a stately walnut burl humidor filled with gorgeous unbanded cigars. The requests poured in. In September 1992, the first CIGAR AFICIONADO was released.

Shanken's goal was a circulation of 20,000. The first issue far surpassed that, going out to an audience of more than 100,000 and was a hit from the start. "The magazine actually turned a profit in the first year, which is unheard of in publishing," says Shanken.

And 25 years later, CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine is still going strong. ♦



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A Cuban Legend



Recollections

Veterans of the premium cigar industry reflect on the changes of the last quarter century

BY THE CIGAR AFICIONADO STAFF

David Berkebile

David Berkebile, owner of Georgetown Tobacco in Washington, D.C., remembers a lackluster industry 25 years ago. But by 1995, it was booming. “Sales for us that year were up 48 percent,” he says. The next year they grew another 47 percent. Berkebile marvels at the chaos. “Everyone was making a cigar, particularly those who did not know how and were in it for the money. Some companies just shipped you large quantities of whatever they thought you might be thankful for, and I wasn’t,” he says. “In one incident, I loaded my pickup and drove it full of cigars back to the sales rep’s home and put it on his doorstep. He got my message.”

Craig Cass

When Craig Cass’s family opened its first Tinderbox store in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the late 1980s, it sold far more pipes than cigars. “At that time the pipe business was very good,” he says. Cigars made up only 25 percent of his business, and until 1992 cigar prices were far lower.

“The superpremium cigars in the early 1990s were Macanudos, which were \$3, \$4 cigars,” Cass recalls. “I had an 800-square-foot store. My humidor was an oversized closet.”

Cass was steeped in the action as the cigar boom saw soaring sales on the front lines of retail. “In the 1990s, the cigar business began to grow and the tide started to turn. It was 1992, 1993 when our humidor started to grow.” When Davidoff moved into the U.S. market in the early 1990s, it brought prices of \$8 to \$10. Cass’s



Cigar retailer David Berkebile in his Washington, D.C., store in 1967.

father was dubious. “He said, ‘There’s no way in this country we can sell an \$8 cigar,’” Cass remembers. Cass now owns six Tinderbox of the Carolinas stores, four in the Charlotte area, two in Myrtle Beach. “Today,” he says, “cigars and related items make up 90 percent of the business. That’s a pretty big transition.”

Edgar Cullman Jr.

In the 25 years since CIGAR AFICIONADO was launched, it would be a challenge to come up with people who contributed to the renaissance of cigars more than Edgar Cullman Jr. As the former president and CEO of General Cigar, he oversaw one of the largest cigar brands ever created for the United States, Macanudo. “When the

magazine came out, it was really exciting to see cigars become so popular,” Cullman says. “I mean cigar families went from being just old cigar makers to becoming celebrities.” But he says that the magazine’s real achievement was portraying cigars as elements in a broader lifestyle. “That’s what we used to create the Club Macanudo concept,” Cullman says. “The whole idea was to take it beyond just a cigar brand, and turn the club and the brand into something that was part of a lifestyle.” Cullman also oversaw the expansion of General Cigar, and its acquisition of such major brands as Punch and Hoyo de Monterrey from Villazon, and La Gloria Cubana. “There were just so many amazing things happening in those days,” Cullman says. “Cigarmakers were forced to learn how to market their cigars better, and it was good for the industry.” He saw the retail part of the business change as well. “Everyone started building walk-in humidors, and we all had to learn how to display our cigars differently. Consumers went from buying a box, and that was their cigar, to walking in a shop and walking out with a variety of cigars.”

Jhonys Diaz

Jhonys Diaz has been in the cigar business since 1992 and is in charge of one of the largest cigarmaking operations in the world as vice president of operations for General Cigar. He’s seen the cigar boom come and go, the dawn of social media and the changes in preferences among cigar consumers, but despite all the progress he says that General’s techniques for making cigars has essentially

Curt (left) and Fred Diebel, circa 1970s.



Smoking cigars in the Dominican Republic in 1992, from left: Robert Levin, Carlos Fuente Sr., Carlos Fuente Jr. and Pete Johnson.

stayed the same. “The way we approach cigarmaking has not changed and I’m very proud of that,” he asserts. “For us, it’s about passion, and a staunch commitment to quality and old-world techniques.”

He does allow that consumers are searching for different flavors and novel smoking experiences in a way they were not two and a half decades ago. This has led to the search for new taste profiles through developing new cigar blends and experimenting with new tobaccos. “It’s been fun and rewarding to spread our wings and wow cigar lovers with cigars made with exotic and new tobaccos,” he says. “It’s like the best of both worlds—keeping true to our heritage while keeping up with the times.”

Curt Diebel

Curt Diebel, owner of Diebel’s Sportsman’s Gallery in Kansas City, Missouri, recalls that the market for premium cigars was much smaller at the start of the 1990s. “Pre-1992, the premium cigar market was in decline,” Diebel says. “It had been in decline for about 30 years.” But a surge in consumer demand changed Diebel’s business forever. “The cigar boom peaked for us July ’96 to June ’97. We doubled our business every month.” For

some of Diebel’s longtime customers, however, the expanding cigar market was a double-edged sword. “Pre-boom cigar smokers were always a bit put out by the boom. Even though it brought in a new variety of cigar shapes and brands and drastically improved the selection, it also brought in a bunch of newbies. You had this explosion of new brands, and with it, more and more smokers came into the market—the regulars couldn’t get what they wanted. They couldn’t get their favorite smokes. There simply wasn’t enough.”

Fernando Dominguez

He’s been in the tobacco business for more than 30 years, but Fernando Dominguez Valdes-Hevia, of Imperial Brands, truly became close to cigars in 2000 when he moved to Havana in the early days of the joint venture between Cuba’s Habanos S.A. and Spain’s Tabacalera S.A. “It’s paradise for cigar smokers,” he says of Cuba. “When I go to Cuba now, I usually smoke seven, eight, nine cigars per day.” As the premium cigar director of Imperial Brands PLC, Dominguez has witnessed all manner of changes. “What has *not* changed? Everything but the essence of premium cigars,” he says. One notable new trend is the way cigars are

sold. “E-commerce represents around 50 percent of total sales in a country like the United States, the world’s largest cigar market,” he explains. “Another change has been the gradual demand shift towards shorter but thicker cigars to enjoy their taste and aroma in less time.”

Jonathan Drew

Today Jonathan Drew is an industry star, and as president of Drew Estate he oversees a company that makes tens of millions of cigars a year. But his 1995 entry into the business was modest, as a retailer operating a 16-square-foot cigar kiosk at the World Trade Center Mall in downtown Manhattan. He started small but always thought big, and three years after selling his first smoke he moved to Nicaragua to complete his evolution from retailer to cigarmaker, making a foothold in a business traditionally dominated by those with Cuban roots. “The thing that’s baked in my brain forever happened when I moved to Nicaragua to live full time. Almost every house was still riddled with bullet holes, as people were just coming out of a brutal civil war,” he says. Today, Nicaragua is one of the world’s largest cigar producers, and Estelí is now riddled with cigar factories rather than bullet holes. Drew Estate even

leads popular cigar tours to Estelí known as Cigar Safaris. “Anyone who has been on Cigar Safari knows that things are so different now,” Drew says.

Carlos Fuente Jr.

When Carlos Fuente Jr. was a boy, cigars were made in the family living room. Today, Arturo Fuente Cigars, the company he runs, is an industry powerhouse, making some 30 million cigars a year by hand. Fuente has long been the blender of the family, creating such varied brands as the mild Chateau Fuente, the complex Don Carlos and the robust Arturo Fuente Añejo. Fuente saw firsthand how Americans have moved from more mild cigars to ones with fuller flavor, echoing his own personal tastes. Years ago, “everyone wanted mild, but I wanted more intense,” he says. “Maybe it’s part of my heritage, but it’s just what I love.” In 1992, the Fuentes planted their first crop on Chateau de la Fuente, where wrappers grow for their signature product, the Fuente Fuente OpusX. Today, Fuente is changing his factory in the Dominican Republic, creating new rolling galleries, gorgeous outdoor spaces and new facilities. “One thing I learned from my father: you run the cigar business with your heart, not with pencil and paper,” he says. “And our greatest passion is tobacco.”

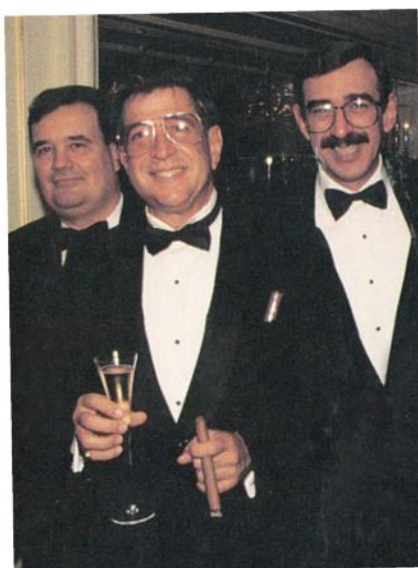
Litto Gomez

Two-and-a-half decades ago a moment changed the world for Litto Gomez. That’s when his Miami jewelry shop was robbed. He thought he would be shot and killed. Soon afterward Gomez left jewelry behind to forge a new business: making cigars. He opened his doors in the Dominican Republic in 1994, creating product completely unlike the powerhouses he is known for today. “I was a big fan of the typical, traditional Dominican cigar of the times,” Gomez says. “Connecticut shade, Dominican filler and binder, light wrappers—they were mild cigars. At the time, even if I wanted to make stronger cigars, I couldn’t. I remember calling, looking for tobacco. Nobody knew who I was.”

The next problem was the oversupply that followed the cigar boom, but as some

pulled back and became conservative, Gomez took the opposite strategy, buying a tobacco farm in 1997. Those leaves expanded his abilities as a blender, as his tastes were changing. “My own palate as a smoker started demanding more flavor, more power, stronger cigars.” Stronger blends led to Gomez’s signature creation, the La Flor Dominicana Andalusian Bull, the 2016 Cigar of the Year.

While some pine for the good old days, Gomez lives for the here and now. “It’s exciting, it’s great tobaccos, great flavors,



Hendrik Kelner, Benjamin Menendez and Manuel Quesada at the CIGAR AFICIONADO launch party, September 1992.

beautiful wrappers—you have it all now. I don’t think there was ever a time in history that there were so many good choices of great tobaccos available. As a cigarmaker, I’m having a blast.”

Pete Johnson

Pete Johnson hasn’t always been a cigar star. Before he established his popular Tatuaje brand, he worked on the retail side of the business. Before that, he was just another cigar lover.

He fondly remembers that Henry Clays retailed for less than a dollar in 1992, and how at that time every shop humidor stocked Jamaican smokes.

“I got into the business in 1993,” he says. “I bought my first cigar after seeing a

news report about a charity dinner where everyone was enjoying cigars. It looked like a nice way to relax, so I went to the local liquor store and bought a 50-cent cigar. I had no idea what I was buying but I fell in love with that moment, and the peace of mind the cigar gave me.” He later bought a Pléiades for \$2.50. “I couldn’t believe that I spent that much on a cigar and I was embarrassed and afraid to tell my girlfriend at the time.” But the cigar got him hooked on the culture and he visited every cigar store in Los Angeles. “I had no idea that I would be in the cigar business the following year.”

While Johnson is known for his creative use of Nicaraguan tobaccos in his blends, he remembers a time when the Central American country wasn’t as highly regarded as it is now. “Nicaraguan cigars were hard to find in 1992 because of the U.S. embargo against Nicaragua that ended in 1990. Now, Nicaraguan cigars are leading the pack.”

Hendrik Kelner

When Davidoff made the move from Cuba to the Dominican Republic, the Swiss company needed a true tobacco man to run the operation. Enter the talents and efficiencies of Hendrik “Henke” Kelner. His service to Davidoff began in the early ’90s, when the market was grim. “Before 1992 the cigar industry was a no-growth market, with imports to the U.S.A. between 90 and 100 million cigars a year, consisting of traditional consumers who were conservative,” Kelner remembers. “The industry was without any promotional enthusiasm, without a desire for knowledge, and no innovative offerings. It was an industry in decline, without a future.”

In a “no-growth” atmosphere and with plans to introduce some very expensive cigars, Davidoff’s confidence in Kelner must have been enormous. Certainly more than the confidence Kelner had for the future of CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine. When Kelner heard of Marvin R. Shanken’s plans to create the magazine, he thought it would fail. “Marvin answered: I’m going to do it even if it costs me a million dollars,” says Kelner. “Today, thanks to Marvin, millions of people discovered what they

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did not have, a friend and companion for a life with more sensory experiences that we teach and train in the pleasures of life.”

Guillermo León

In 1992, Guillermo León was working at the holding company that ran his family’s group of businesses, which included the La Aurora S.A. cigar factory, makers of the oldest cigar brand from the Dominican Republic. Two years later, León joined La Aurora, which, at the time, produced about three million cigars annually. It was the early days of the cigar boom, and sales soared. By 1996, the factory had doubled production to six million, and a year later it had doubled again to 12 million. “In the 1990s, the Dominican Republic became the world’s largest exporter of handmade cigars,” León says. He became heavily active in ProCigar, an organization created to uplift and protect the image of cigar manufacturers in the Dominican Republic. “We needed to be able to defend, protect and disseminate the good work of our sector, while preserving our legacy,” León says. “ProCigar has been able to combine the efforts of all those who are part of the industry, not only to represent us, but also to manage the various situations that arise in the world of tobacco, which sometimes are delicate.”

Chuck Levi

Chuck Levi is the owner of Chicago’s Iwan Ries & Co., the second-oldest cigar shop in America. He recalls a cigar industry that was very different in the early ’90s. It was a time of stronger allegiance to a preferred cigar, and it affected how cigarmakers operated. “We didn’t have new brands coming out everyday like we do today,” Levi says. “A guy smoked a Macanudo or a Montecristo and that was it—nowadays the customer comes into the shop and wants to know ‘what’s new?’” He says that consumer trends have changed, but the importance of the cigar lounge has remained the same, especially for attracting new customers. “We’re still getting a good number of young smokers—you know, guys in their 30s. Not the numbers in the mid to late ’90s, during the boom, of course—but still a good amount. In my

opinion, the cigar lounge has helped bring people in. Still does. It’s about the camaraderie. You can go to a nice cigar lounge anywhere around the country, sit down and have a smoke, maybe a cocktail, and meet new people. Start up a conversation. It really brings people together.”

Robert Levin

Robert Levin has been in the cigar business since the early 1970s, joining his father at Holt’s, the family cigar shop in Philadelphia. “It was a totally different business then,” he said. Cigars were still being made in the City of Brotherly Love. “There were several factories, and mass-market cigars were still being sold in the cigar stores. There was no such thing as Walgreens and CVS.” The machine-made cigars cost 50 cents, and handmades were about \$1.

In the mid-1980s, Levin decided to create his own cigar brand, Ashton, to move to a more profitable segment of the industry. There were few new brands on the market at the time. “It wasn’t a growing business,” he says. “But it was the business I knew.” In 1989 he moved production of Ashton—then about a 300,000 unit a year brand—to the Fuente family, the company that makes it to this day.

“From ’88 to ’92, Ashton was growing at a very nice rate,” says Levin, “but after

’92, it was an explosion, after the publication of CIGAR AFICIONADO.” Sales were doubling, then tripling. By 1994 it became a million-unit brand. Today, Ashton Distributors Inc. sells more than 8 million Ashtons every year.

Levin has expanded the business considerably during his tenure, taking it from a shop employing five people back in the 1970s to a multifaceted company that includes retail and wholesale and now employs 125, including a full-time salesforce. Ashton has a host of other varieties, and the company also has cigars made for it by the Garcia family, including San Cristobal and La Aroma de Cuba. As he worked for his father before him, today Levin’s children Sathya and Meera work with him in the family business.

Daniel Marshall

Danny Marshall has a gleam in his eye as he shows off the box, a modest wooden humidor he crafted in 1982. “The first humidor I ever made,” he says with pride. It was crafted with care, with a simple—and by today’s standards, quite primitive—series of vials that a cigar smoker would fill precariously with water to keep cigars from drying out. “That was the humidification system of the day,” Marshall says with a smile and a shrug.

Humidification has come a long way



Chuck Levi (left) with Marvin R. Shanken at an early 1990s cigar trade show.

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17

BIG SMOKE EVENING

VIP Ticket: 5:30 – 9:30pm

General Admission: 6:30 – 9:30pm

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18

SEMINARS

9:00 – 9:30am First Tasting, No. 4 Cigar (No. 3 is Cuban)

9:30 – 10:10am Made in Miami

10:10 – 10:30am Second Cigar Tasting, No. 2 Cigar

10:30 – 11:00am How to Spot a Fake Cuban Cigar

11:00 – 11:20am Third Cigar Tasting, No. 1 Cigar

11:20 – 11:55am 25th Anniversary Panel

12:15 – 2:30pm Luncheon with Drew Estate

BIG SMOKE EVENING

VIP Ticket: 5:30 – 9:30pm

General Admission: 6:30 – 9:30pm

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

SEMINARS

9:30 – 10:15am Cigar Lover's Breakfast

10:30 – 11:30am Altadis Presents: Roll Your Own Montecristo

11:30am – 12:30pm Single Malt & Cigars Seminar



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The Newman family, circa 1994. From left, Stanford, Eric and Bobby.

since 1982. So have humidors sales. Marshall remembers how slow his industry was in his first decade of business. "It was such a small cottage industry. It was sleepy," he says. "I'd be at trade shows and no one would come by." Things changed in 1992, with the advent of CIGAR AFICIONADO and the unprecedented cigar boom, which saw demand more than triple in a few short years. When people began buying more cigars, the need for humidors in which to store them boomed as well.

Marshall has been there all along. And while the vial system is now but a relic of times long gone by, he still makes humidors built to last.

Benjamin Menendez

Benjamin Menendez's cigar career can be divided into two incarnations: in Cuba and out of Cuba. He started on that Caribbean island making his family's famous cigars: Montecristo and H. Upmann. When his family's business was nationalized, Menendez fled his country of birth in the 1960s to make non-Cuban cigars for the U.S. market, first in the Canary Islands and, finally, in the Dominican Republic. But he watched the premium cigar industry stagnate for some three decades.

"In 1992, the industry was still in diapers," says the man everyone knows as Benji. "When Cuba was out of the picture

in the 1960s, the premium business in this country practically disappeared. It had to start over. There was a little left in Tampa, in Jamaica and the Canary Islands, but only a little bit." He credits the leaf broker José "Pepe" Mendez and Carlos Toraño Sr., who imported viable Cuban seeds, improving the quality of Dominican tobacco.

"I don't care what anybody says, CIGAR AFICIONADO started the boom," Menendez says. "But the boom was a flash in the pan. It was like the California Gold Rush in 1849 where everyone was panning for gold, except this time it was tobacco." In the ensuing 25 years, he says, came fantastic changes. "Look at companies like Fuente and Davidoff and brands like Partagás and Macanudo. They were small 25 years ago and barely developed." Menendez prefers today's business climate. "It's not experiencing the explosion of the boom, but the growth is steady and solid."

Menendez admits to smoking new cigars made by the current generation of cigarmakers. "Cigars that have nothing to do with the large brands I was involved with," he says. "And they are very, very interesting. I was told many years ago that mass-market, machine-made cigars are for corporations, but premium cigars are a family business. Except for a few big companies, I see today how true that is."

The Newmans

For 122 years, J.C. Newman Cigar Co. has been rolling cigars, surviving two world wars, the Great Depression and adapting to the Cuban Embargo. Brothers Eric and Bobby, the grandsons of founder Julius Caesar Newman, who now run the maker of Diamond Crown, have also seen their fair share of ups and downs and challenges during their tenure.

In a joint statement, the brothers report that industry sales had dropped by 75 percent from 1963 to 1992. "No one made any money in the industry—not the tobacco growers, not the manufacturers, not the importers and distributors, and not the retailers. The industry was thought by many to be headed for extinction, until Marvin Shanken appeared on the scene. His magazine brought dignity, status and credibility to the industry for the first time. Overnight, cigar smoking became trendy and stylish."

The Newmans believe that the cigar boom of the '90s has led to better quality cigars today, as well as higher profits for the companies that make them. Increased margins for both the grower and the manufacturer, enabled them to dramatically improve their growing and manufacturing processes. "Tobacco growers could afford to employ the latest growing technology, using better quality fertilizers and insecticides and farming techniques, resulting in better tobacco. Similarly, cigar manufacturers could now afford to properly age their tobaccos and focus more on quality than on quantity, implementing new quality-control measures such as having teams of cigar supervisors oversee and inspect the work of the regular inspectors. The result was a more consistent, better quality cigar, assuring that the premium-cigar industry is here to stay."

John Oliva Sr. and Jr.

The Olivas of Tampa, Florida, have been a major cigar tobacco family for three generations. John Oliva Sr. recalls a number of people who helped rebuild the premium cigar industry after Cuban tobacco was no longer available in the U.S.

"I miss the giants who we had the

tatua'je

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pleasure of working with,” he says. “Frank Llaneza, Carlos Fuente Sr., Stanford Newman, Edgar Cullman, Carl Berger and many more. I learned almost as much from them as I did from the one I miss the most—Angel Oliva Sr., my father. He always told me: ‘Change is inevitable and all businesses have ups and downs. Don’t worry about the downs and don’t get overly excited about the ups. Worry about staying flat.’ He was right. Not bad for a guy who never went past fourth grade.”

Even with the high demand for tobacco during the cigar boom, Oliva Sr. didn’t expect the rock-star status conferred on people in the industry. “We all became celebrities,” he says. “I even had Tom Selleck ask if he could take a photo with me at the Grand Havana room.”

His son John Jr. is treasurer, but his knowledge of tobacco makes him a key industry player. “My formal entry into the cigar business came sometime around September of 1992 and was preceded with a sit-down with my father whereby he explained to me the uncertainty of a future in the cigar industry,” he says. “Sometime later during the boom I remember the old industry stalwarts and their incredulity regarding CIGAR AFICIONADO’s influence. When I started we were primarily growing Connecticut, Sumatra,

and to a lesser degree Cuban-seed wrappers for natural and candela cigars in Ecuador and Honduras. [The magazine] allowed the cigar industry to think outside the box, try new things, and create cigars that were as coveted as those from Cuba.”

José Oliva

When American interest in cigars was reaching an all-time high in 1995, Gilberto Oliva Sr. and his son Gilberto Jr. created Oliva Cigar Co. Two years later, however, an oversaturated market put the young company in peril. During these lean times, when importing tobacco became unfeasible, the family was able to rely on Gilberto’s inventory of quality Nicaraguan leaf. “We had some very real advantages,” says José Oliva, president of the company. “Tobacco growing isn’t automated—you can’t control the weather—experience is always the answer.”

A steady growth in the production of premium tobacco gives today’s new cigar-makers an advantage that did not exist two decades earlier. “Today quality manufacturers are very accessible,” says Oliva. “You see new companies with tremendous offerings and that benefits the entire industry.” This, says Oliva, makes it possible for first-generation cigarmakers to create legacies of their own. “There’s no

reason why these companies won’t also be around 100 years from now.”

The Padróns

José Orlando Padrón began making cigars for a simple reason—he couldn’t find a good cigar to smoke in Miami in the 1960s. “When I arrived here [from Cuba], the only cigars available were these Filipino cigars that cost 10 cents a piece, and they were unsmokeable,” he says. “I felt that I had to produce a cigar for Cubans who missed their homeland.” He began making cigars in 1964, with one roller, selling them for a quarter apiece, \$6 for a bundle of 25.

His son Jorge had another motivation to enter the family business. “Before I drove, my dad would wake me up at 6:30 in the morning to go to the office,” Jorge says. “Early in the morning he would come into my room, turn on the lights and start shaking my feet so I would get out of the bed.” The company grew, especially when it began using Nicaraguan tobaccos. In the face of a civil war that would pockmark its factories with bullets, it moved its manufacturing there. But sales remained centered in Miami until 1993, when the company went to its first trade show. Initial results were disappointing. “We sold to 12 retailers,” Jorge says. The following year, the Padróns debuted the super-premium 1964 Anniversary Series, with its chocolate-brown hue and box-pressed shape, and the world began to discover Padrón. The company has come a long way from 25-cent-cigars. Today, its most expensive smoke sells for more than \$30.

“My father has worked very hard to get where we are today,” Jorge has said, “and I consider it a responsibility, not just on my end, but my family members as well, to uphold that tradition that’s been passed down.”

Rocky Patel

Before Rocky Patel entered the cigar business, he was a cigar-smoking lawyer in Los Angeles. He recalls that in 1992, cigars were not only more openly enjoyed compared with today, but celebrated. “It was just super cool and hip to be smoking a cigar back then,” he says. “You were



Jorge (left) and Orlando Padrón in 1993, at their company’s first trade show.

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looked up to as a star when you had a cigar, a cool S.T. Dupont lighter and an Elie Bleu humidor in your house. It showed that you achieved some level of success. Anti-smoking establishment was not around.”

Patel would gather with an eclectic group of successful individuals inside the members-only Grand Havana Room in Beverly Hills. “It was just an odd mix of plastic surgeons, attorneys, doctors, celebrities, writers, producers, directors. Very flamboyant. You know, everybody let their hair down and just enjoyed smoking a cigar,” he says. “It was mellow. It wasn’t like a party. People would just sit around, socialize and talk about cigars, life, work, politics, sports and movies—all that fun stuff. We were there almost six nights per week, and it was the place to be.”

What Patel misses most is the freedom to smoke nearly anywhere. “Cigars were all over, and cigar dinners were everywhere. Now it’s like the People’s Republic of China.”

David Perez

David Perez heads up A.S.P. Enterprises Inc., a tobacco growing and brokering concern that has been providing tobacco leaf for the cigar industry for decades and he remembers the era of a quarter century ago as lean days for the company. “In the early ’90s we had just acquired the farm in Ecuador. It was a leap of faith—we had no customers. But we believed in tobacco. My dad believed in his heart that there was a future for tobacco. In 1992, I graduated college. I had to make a decision. My dad wanted me to be a lawyer but I decided that I wanted to be part of the family business.” Perez says that over the years, the company grew steadily and today, business is strong. “We’re doing quite well compared with 1992,” Perez laughs. “We never jumped like some other companies during the boom. Business grew slowly and steadily to where we are today—with quality tobacco.”

Ernesto Perez-Carrillo

Back in 1992 Ernesto Perez-Carrillo was selling cigars for about a buck apiece, making La Gloria Cubana, El Rico Habano and other cigars in a crowded,



Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, surrounded by his family in his Little Havana cigar factory in 1992.

rustic factory/cigar store on Miami’s Calle Ocho. “At that time, when you made cigars, there was hardly any profit,” Carrillo would say a decade later. “The business wasn’t doing that well. We were making a living, but it was a struggle.”

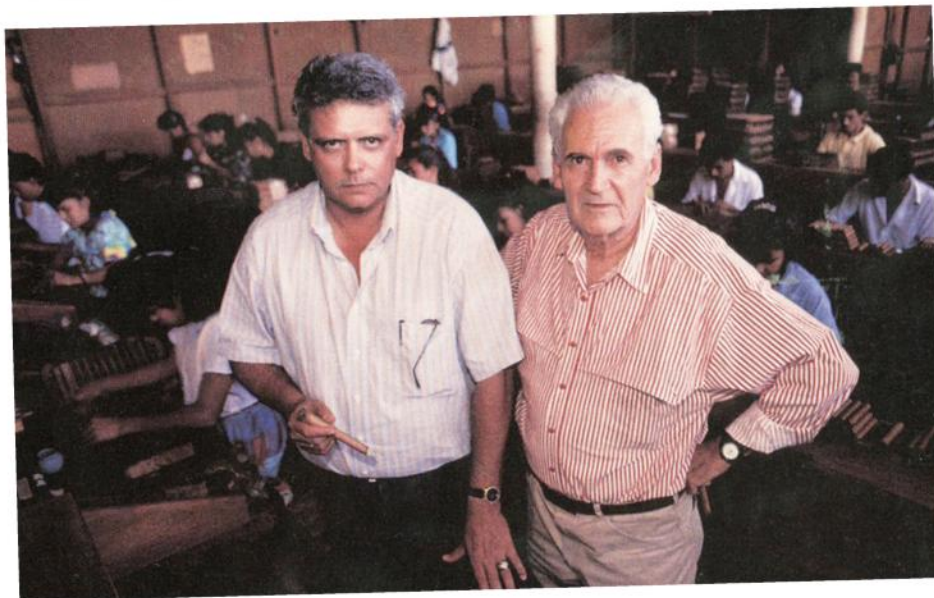
He very nearly left it all behind, for as a younger man he yearned to be a jazz drummer and didn’t see much of a future in his father’s little cigar business. In 1976, he and his father were close to a deal to sell their factory for \$125,000 to the makers of Royal Jamaica cigars. He had a change of heart just before the deal was complete, and told his father he had changed his mind, and he wanted to be a cigarmaker.

It was a fortunate move, for his world turned upside down when the little brand got a big rating in the third issue of CIGAR AFICIONADO. Between 1992 and 1995 his cigar sales doubled, from 720,000 cigars a year to 1.4 million. He expanded, sold the company in 1999 for a good price—much, much more than \$125,000—and today he is making cigars with his family at EPC Cigar Co.

Gary Pesh

Gary Pesh, owner of the cigar-store chain Old Virginia Tobacco Co., recalls how the ’90s brought a variety of

new faces. “The cigar business became a cool thing. I saw it in our consumer demographics. Before the ’90s, our typical cigar customer was the ‘bundle guy’—he didn’t really care what cigar he was smoking, he just wanted to smoke. Suddenly there were people willing to try new, interesting cigars—cigars that often had a higher price tag. It was a new crowd of young professionals who wanted to learn more about cigar culture, to spend money, sit down and enjoy a cigar—maybe enjoy an adult beverage, you know, sit with the guys. And as you move to the mid-’90s, there’s more women coming into the marketplace. There are people enjoying cigars in restaurants, hotels, people who weren’t smoking everyday—just once a month—the casual smoker.” However, Pesh notes that as cigar companies rushed to meet the demand of consumers, the quality of the cigars suffered. “In my opinion, there weren’t enough cigars of consistent quality. There wasn’t enough consistent tobacco.” Now, Pesh celebrates the variety of high-quality cigar blends and the amount of information available to consumers. “Today, the consumer is more educated, the retailer is more educated—and you have cigar manufacturers who are willing to give more information about their brands.”



Tobacco grower and cigarmaker Nestor Plasencia (left) in Honduras in 1993.

The Plasencias

If you smoke Nicaraguan cigars, you most likely have tobacco that was grown by the Plasencia family somewhere in your humidor. The company is run by the father-and-son team of Nestor Plasencia and Nestor Andrés Plasencia. “My father recalls that in 1992 very few clients came to Honduras and Nicaragua,” says Nestor Andrés. In high school at the time, he always accompanied his father to the tobacco fields and cigar factories. “The taste of the cigars around 1992 according to our experience were cigars with lighter wrappers and thinner ring gauges,” he says. “I remember many vitolas, such as coronas, lanceros, etc. Now the cigars that we make have more flavor with darker wrapper such as colorados and maduros.” Size preferences have shifted to much larger ring gauges, he says, noting that today’s tobacco varieties are more resistant to disease than they were 25 years ago, thanks to the genetic work that has been done in the fields. “The first thing my father said when asked about the tobacco industry in 1992 was, ‘There are two great eras in this industry: before CIGAR AFICIONADO and after CIGAR AFICIONADO. Period.’”

Manuel Quesada

Manolo Quesada remembers a time when cigar lovers were tied to one

brand with very little desire to leave that pattern.” The level of cigar and tobacco knowledge of the smokers [in 1992] was very low or nonexistent,” says Quesada. “However, countries of origin did have a high level of loyalty.” The man behind such brands as Fonseca, Casa Magna and others also recalls that most cigars maxed out in thickness at 48 ring gauge, though Churchills had started to climb near the 50-ring-gauge range.

“In the 25 years since, the changes that have occurred are known by all. First and most impacting was the appearance of CIGAR AFICIONADO, which started providing an immense amount of information that the smokers took in as long awaited nourishment. Smokers with a thirst for knowledge were now interested in countries, farms, varieties, manufacturers and their factories, tobaccos used in the blends of cigars they were enjoying, humidity and temperatures in all stages of tobacco fermentation, making and storing for aging. Smokers also became aware that their palates were evolving—more intense blends began to appear and thicker ring gauges also increased in popularity.”

Today, Quesada believes smokers are more informed than they ever have been. “Before, places where information could be obtained were nonexistent compared with today,” he says. Plus communication

Edward Sahakian, puffing in London in 1993.



among smokers has changed the market drastically. “It’s a whole new world in the cigar industry.”

Hirochi Robaina

Hirochi Robaina was handed the keys to a tobacco kingdom by his legendary grandfather, Alejandro Robaina, who ran the family’s iconic farm, Cuchillas de Barbacoa in San Luís in Cuba’s Vuelta Abajo. When his grandfather died in 2010, the young Robaina took total control of the farm, keeping intact its reputation as one of the best tobacco growing lands in the island nation. “I used to sit on the porch with him nearly every night talking about tobacco,” he says. “I have notebooks filled with the things he taught me.” Robaina has not only kept the farm’s legend intact but he has expanded beyond Cuba in a way that would have been unheard of decades ago. He launched a cigar brand with Omar Gonzalez Aleman that is made in Nicaragua, and he consults on tobacco growing projects around the world. In 2010, he also started growing tobacco in Ecuador in collaboration with a cousin, Igmarr Robaina.

Edward Sahakian

Edward Sahakian is puffing away on a Trinidad Reyes via a video chat from his London cigar store, tie knotted just so and a pleasant smile on his face. “Nineteen

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ninety-two for us is a landmark in the cigar world,” he says. “It’s like when people talk about B.C. and A.D., before CIGAR AFICIONADO was published and after.”

Sahakian opened his Davidoff shop in London in 1980, and has watched the market for cigars change considerably. “The biggest change I have seen is in a younger generation of people smoking cigars,” he says. He estimates the average age of his customer has gone from “50-plus” to around 35 over the past 25 years. He also has witnessed his customers evolving to embrace the value of aged cigars. Back in the early 1990s and before, he says, “A lot of people would throw [old cigars] away, thinking they’re gone beyond their sell-by date.”

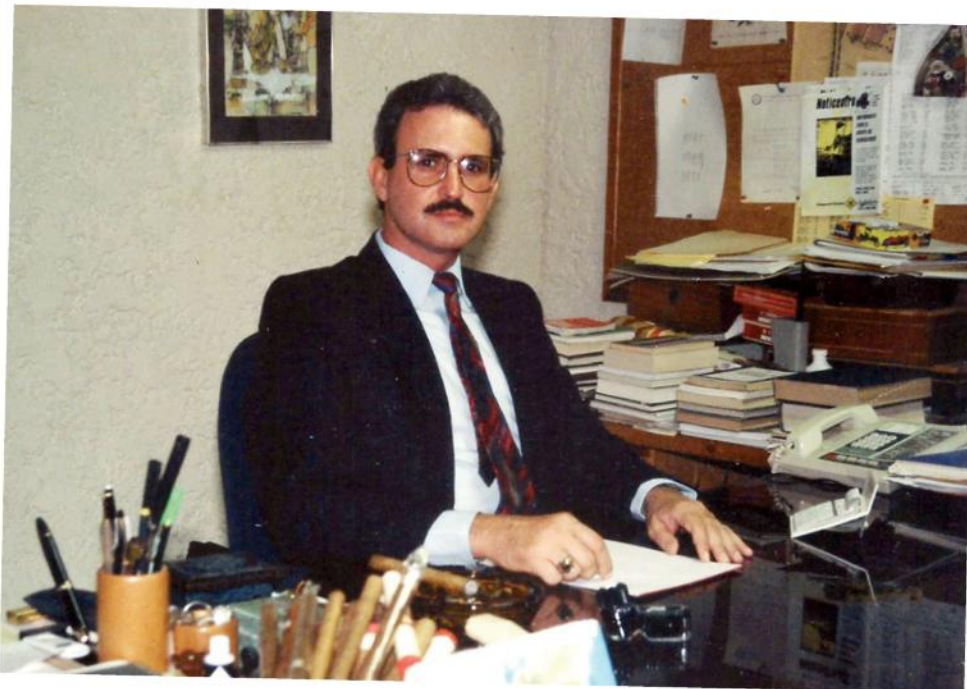
One change the 73-year-old Sahakian hasn’t enjoyed is the fattening of cigars. “In the old days the fattest cigar was a robusto,” he says. “Now robusto is one of the smaller ring gauge cigars.” He enjoys the classic sizes, such as lanceros, and smokes several cigars a day.

José Seijas

The career of José Seijas has not only spanned 43 years in the cigar industry, but includes an addendum. Best known as the man who once helmed the Tabacalera de Garcia factory, where the Dominican versions of Montecristo, H. Upmann and Romeo y Julieta are produced, Seijas briefly retired before forming his La Matilde Cigar Co. in 2013 and now makes cigars on a much smaller scale.

Not surprisingly, he has seen some substantial changes. “Blends are more complex, packaging plays bigger roles in purchase decisions, sizes have become larger and we have a wider range of consumers,” he says. “Cigar aficionados now span generations, from the young adults starting off their careers to their grandparents enjoying their retirement, they cross socioeconomic brackets and can enjoy the magical experience that is a good cigar all over the planet.”

Seijas has also seen a shift on the production side, as a business once dominated “by a handful of large companies” now is more diverse. “We now have the full range of enterprises—from one-man-shows to



José Seijas, some 25 years ago, at work in La Romana.

small and medium family-owned—all the way to multinational corporations,” he says. “The democratization of producers has provided a boon to our consumers.”

Seijas says the change has not come without some important things remaining the same. “This has been an industry that has embraced the changes of our times without forgetting its roots,” he says. “While everything appears different, nothing has really changed: a cigar is still a cigar. It still gives us that singular experience that each of us has found in our favorite smoke. And that’s a beautiful thing, a beautiful thing indeed.”

The Turrents

If there is a first family of premium Mexican tobacco, it is the Turrents. Alberto and Alejandro Turrent, the father-and-son team behind Nueva Maticapan de Tabacos S.A. de C.V., not only make Te-Amo cigars but they grow more cigar tobacco than anyone else in the country. Their San Andrés maduro wrapper leaf, cultivated outside of Veracruz, is in particularly high demand today. That wasn’t always the case. “What my father remembers about the cigar industry in early 1992 is that back then the general feeling was a bit sad and pessimistic,” says Alejandro

Turrent. “There was no excitement. People in the industry were happy if their sales were flat year after year. The majority of the cigar smokers were getting old and there weren’t any newcomers...I used to join my father in some shows, all the booths were quite simple, in general, you could see that there wasn’t much excitement going around,” says Turrent. “Of course things changed drastically in the years after.”

Stephen Willett

The Boston tobacconist L.J. Peretti had but one humidor in 1992, but over the years owner Stephen Willett has slowly removed pipes from the wall to make room for more cigars. These decisions have not been made in haste, as the tobacconist, founded in 1870, prides itself on offerings of pipe tobacco. But consumer interest in the growing cigar market forced Willett to carefully consider which brands he puts on his shelves. “I don’t buy every boutique cigar,” he says. Before the 1990s, L.J. Peretti would keep about \$35,000 worth of cigar stock. Today it’s closer to \$750,000. “But we still don’t have a walk-in humidor,” says Willett. “We take the box out of the humidor and give it to the customer. We’re old school.” ♦

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www.neptunecigar.com

Corona Cigar, Sandlake, FL
www.coronacigar.com

Davidoff of Geneva, Tampa, FL
www.coronacigar.com/Davidoff-of-Geneva-Tampa/

Tampa Sweethearts, Tampa, FL
www.tampasweethearts.com

Thompson Cigar, Tampa, FL
www.thompsoncigar.com

Blend Bar & Cigar, Indianapolis, IN
www.blendbarcigar.com

Cigar Chateau, Wichita, KS
www.cigarchateau.com

Pleasant Smoke Shop, Malden, MA
www.pleasantSmoke.com

Nat Sherman Townhouse, New York, NY
www.natsherman.com

Casa Fuente, Las Vegas, NV
www.casafuentespiritsociety.com

The Lake Club, Youngstown, OH
www.thelakeclubohio.com

Famous Smoke Shop, Easton, PA
www.famous-smoke.com

Holt's Cigar Company, Philadelphia, PA
www.holts.com

Cigar House, San Juan, PR
www.thecigarhousepr.com

Libation Station, Johnson City, TN
www.libationplaza.com

Blue Smoke of Dallas, Dallas, TX
www.bluesmokeofdallas.com

Finck Cigars, San Antonio, TX
www.finckcigarcompany.com

The Cigar Lodge at Tobacco Town, Beaver, WV
www.tobaccotownwv.com

GOLD SPONSORSHIP LEVEL

Anthony's Cigar Emporium, Tucson, AZ

Stag Tobacconist, Colorado Springs, CO

Smoke Inn's of South Florida, Boynton Beach, FL

P.C.B. Cigars, Panama City Beach, FL

Old City Cigars, Saint Augustine, FL

Tobacco House, Shreveport, LA

Timothy's Fine Cigars, Bay City, MI

Jon's Pipe Shop, Saint Louis, MO

Habana Premium Cigar Shop, Albany, NY

Tobacco Wharf, Dayton, OH

Allentown Smoke Shop, Allentown, PA

Famous Smoke Shop, Easton, PA

Regency Cigar Emporium, East Greenwich, RI

Boda Pipes at McAllister Square Mall, Greenville, SC

Heroes & Legacies, Austin, TX

Cigar Warehouse, Dallas & Plano, TX

Michael's Tobacco, Euless & Keller, TX

Spec's Wine & Liquor, Houston, TX

Stogies World Class Cigars, Houston, TX

Il Regalo Preferito, Laredo, TX

Club Humidor, San Antonio, TX

Market Tobacco Patch, Seattle, WA

DIAMOND SPONSORSHIP LEVEL

Winston's Pipe and Cigar Emporium, Fort Smith, AR

Fox Cigar Bar, Gilbert, AZ

Fair Oaks Cigars, Peoria, AZ

Ambassador Fine Cigars, Phoenix, AZ

Churchill's Fine Cigars, Phoenix, AZ

Havana Cigar Bar & Lounge, Phoenix, AZ

Magnum's Cigar Bar, Phoenix, AZ

Stag Tobacconist, Phoenix, AZ

Cigar King, Scottsdale, AZ

Fox Cigar Bar, Scottsdale, AZ

Owl Ear Smoke Shop, Scottsdale, AZ

The Hiland Family, Scottsdale, AZ

Cigars and More, Bakersfield, CA

Liberty Tobacco, Del Mar, CA

Ohlone Cigar Lounge, Fremont, CA

Taylor's Cigar Lounge, Long Beach, CA

Los Gators Cigar Club, Los Gatos, CA

Telford's Pipe & Cigar, Mill Valley, CA

Maxamar Cigars, Orange, CA

David's Gifts & Tobacco, Rancho Cucamonga, CA

Cigar Clientelle, Santa Clarita, CA

Valencia Cigars & News, Santa Clarita, CA

Liberty Tobacco, San Diego, CA

The Cigar Warehouse, Sherman Oaks, CA

Cigars on 6th, Denver, CO

Tobacco Leaf, Denver, CO

Smoking Cave Outlet, Littleton, CO

Havana Manor, Longmont, CO

Buttheads Tobacco Emporium, Danbury, CT

The Tobacco Shop, Hartford, CT

Mickey Blake's Cigar Lounge, Southington, CT

Maduro University Sarasota, Bradenton, FL

Smoke Inn, Delray Beach, FL

Harbor Cigars, Destin, FL

Waterwheel Cigar, Fernandina Beach, FL

World Famous Cigar Shop, Fort Myers, FL

Aficionado's Pembroke Pines, Hollywood, FL

Cigar Life, Lakeland, FL

Caribbean Cigars, Miami, FL

Havana Humidor, Miami, FL

Miura Cigars, Miami, FL

Executive Cigar Shop & Lounge, Melbourne, FL

King Corona Cigar, Tampa, FL

Tampa Humidor, Tampa, FL

Tobacco Depot of Florida, Multiple Locations in Tampa Bay, FL

GarVino's Cigars, Fine Wine & Gift, The Villages, FL

Low Ball Louie's Tobacco Outlet's of Central Florida, Wintergarden, FL

Blue Havana II, Alpharetta, GA

Cutter's Cigar Emporium, Alpharetta, GA

Buckhead Cigar Club, Atlanta, GA

Cigar Merchant, Roswell, GA

Tamura's Fine Wine & Liquors, Honolulu, HI

Up Down Shop, Chicago, IL

Neumann's Cigars & More, Libertyville, IL

Humidor of Westmont, Westmont, IL

Karma Tobacco & Cigar Lounge, Gary, IN



TOAST ACROSS AMERICA

Riverside Cigars, Jeffersonville, IN
 Angelina Cigars, Plymouth, IN
 The Party Source, Bellevue, KY
 Kremer's Smoke Shoppe, Louisville, KY
 Oxmoor Smoke Shop, Louisville, KY
 The Paducah Cigar Company, Paducah, KY
 Don Juan Cigars of Metairie, Metairie, LA
 Don Juan Cigar, New Orleans, LA
 Mayan Import Company, New Orleans, LA
 Slow Burns Cigar Shoppe, Cantonsville, MD
 Davidus Cigars, Frederick, MD
 Tobacco Leaf, Jessup, MD
 Leonardtown Cigars, Leonardtown, MD
 Signature Cigars, Rockville, MD
 Cigar Room II, Agawam, MA
 S & A Cigars, Watertown, MA
 La Casa Plymouth, Plymouth, MI
 Red Wagon Wine Shoppe, Rochester, MI
 Nolan's Tobacco, Traverse City, MI
 Red Wagon Wine Shoppe, Troy, MI
 Tobacco Grove, Osseo, MN
 Perfect Ash, Saint Paul, MN
 Stogies on Grand, Saint Paul, MN
 The Hill Cigar Company, Saint Louis, MO
 Just For Him, Springfield, MO
 McCranie's Pipe Shop, Charlotte, NC
 Havana Phil's Cigar Company, Greensboro, NC
 Two Brothers Tobacco Shop, Jacksonville, NC
 Blue Ridge Tobacco & Candle Company, Winston Salem, NC
 Twins Smoke Shop, Londonderry, NH
 Castro's Back Rooms, Manchester, NH
 Havana Cigar Lounge, Beachwood, NJ
 Legend Lounge, Brick, NJ
 The Cigar Room, Fort Lee, NJ
 Heritage Premium Cigars, Marlton, NJ
 Smoker's Delight, Union, NJ
 L.J. Zucca, Vineland, NJ
 The Brickhouse Cigar Shop, Wyckoff, NJ
 Primo Cigar Shop, Santa Fe, NM
 Harry's Habana Hut, Bayside, NY

Huntington Humidor, Huntington, NY
 cigarbox, Las Vegas, NV
 Davidoff Cigar Bar, Las Vegas, NV
 En Fuego Cigars & Lounge, Las Vegas, NV
 Royal 10 Cigar & Tobacco, Cleveland, OH
 Stogies, Powell, OH
 Third Street Cigars, Waterville, OH
 Tobacco Exchange, Oklahoma City, OK
 ZT Cigars, Oklahoma City, OK
 Fogue & Bates Cigars, Tulsa, OK
 Best Cigar Prices, Drums, PA
 Atlantic Cigar, Folcroft, PA
 Klaffer's, New Castle, PA
 Philadelphia Cigar and Tobacco, Philadelphia, PA
 Nice Ash Cigars, Warren, PA
 Mr. J's Havana Shop, West Warwick, RI
 Peaceful Henry, Bluffton, SC

Burns Tobacconist, Chattanooga, TN
 Belle Meade Premium Cigar Company, Nashville, TN
 Elite Cigar Cafe, Addison, TX
 Pipe World, Austin & Round Rock, TX
 Prestige Cigars & Tobacco, Bedford, TX
 Dallas Cigars, Dallas, TX
 Cigar Towne, Houston, TX
 Lone Star Tobacco, Houston, TX
 Tobacco Junction, Longview & Tyler, TX
 The Hemingway, Midland & Odessa, TX
 Cigar Palace, Alexandria, VA
 Old Virginia Tobacco Woodbridge, Manassas, VA
 Winston's Humidor, Midlothian, VA
 Emerson's Cigars, Virginia Beach, VA
 Smokey Joe's Cigar Lounge, Tacoma, WA



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Marvin R. Shanken

Editor & Publisher

I had my first cigar when I was a student at the great University of Miami in the 1960s. I went on a day trip to the Bahamas. While I was on the boat, I noticed somebody was smoking a cigar, and he offered one to me. It had a wooden tip—a Hav-A-Tampa Jewel. I later bought a five-pack, which cost me 25 cents. After that, I began smoking bigger cigars, especially Partagás No. 10s. They were real, handmade cigars as opposed to ones that were made by machines.

I had an office in London in the 1980s, and that's when I became good friends with Edward Sahakian, who owns the Davidoff store. It was there that I began buying Cuban cigars. My favorites were some of Cuba's best, Montecristo No. 2s as well as Hoyo de Monterrey Double Coronas.

I used to go to various bars, and my favorite was the one at the Four Seasons' Inn on the Park, which was upstairs. Smoking in bars was welcomed at the time, and I was usually there alone. But any time another gentleman would be there smoking a cigar, we would become instant friends, because we were linked by the fraternity of the cigar. Cigar smoking has always been a way for building friendships wherever I travelled.

Great Smokes

*The editors recall
some of their finest
cigar-smoking
experiences*

David Savona

Executive Editor

I dabbled in cigars as a younger man, but I began smoking them regularly in college. I'd have one on the weekends, or maybe on a lazy Thursday night. It was easier to smoke indoors back in those days, so my preferred smoking spot was the smoking lounge on the floor of my dorm, a spartan room with white cinderblock walls, a



razor-thin blue carpet and industrial wooden furniture built for durability rather than comfort. It sat at the halfway point of the floor dividing the men's section from the women's section. There were plenty of cigarette smokers who would venture in, but I was the sole cigar smoker.

My cigars then were simple things, convenience-store smokes. My favorites at the time were machine-made Munie-maker Brevia 100s that were affordable and pleasant. But I experimented. Cheap cigars with wooden tips, green cigars that I bought once and never again, and the 50 mail-order smokes that were delivered for

the amazing price of \$15. But that was a lot of cigars, more than a semester's worth. To store them, I transformed one of my dorm-room drawers into a humidor, which failed miserably.

When I started working, I could afford fancier cigars. I bought some handmade smokes, found a better humidor at a tag sale and began making my way through cigar stores. The cigar shopping was intimidating—this one's too strong, that one's too bitter, that one is too bland—before I found a copy of *CIGAR AFICIONADO* and began using its scores and tasting notes as a buying guide. Little did I know that those early cigars and that magazine would lead to a rewarding career.

In the summer of 1995, I sat down with Marvin R. Shanken at his home in Long Island for what would become my final job interview. I was nervous—I really wanted the job, but I was trying to play it cool, to show the right amount of desire without looking too anxious. The business magazine I was working for at the time was going nowhere, was available on only one newsstand. The idea of working at a magazine about cigars and the good life, something I truly enjoyed, seemed too good to be true. And it was a winner. I wanted that job more than I had ever wanted anything before in my life.

We sat down on his patio. It was one of those perfect East Coast summer evenings, the rare ones where the humidity is low and the air is perfectly comfortable. He brought out two cigars, bigger than any cigar I had ever smoked before: Punch Double Coronas. They were gorgeous.

We lit up, and began talking. The flavor and complexity blew me away, and about halfway through the cigar I realized I had the job. We kept on speaking, and kept on puffing. In the end, there was only a tiny bit left. We shook hands and I

walked to my car—more than a little woozy from that amazing smoke—and I drove home, excited about the new job. That was more than 22 years ago. Best cigar I've ever smoked.

Gordon Mott

Senior Contributing Editor

I was a young, and very green, foreign correspondent in 1978 covering the Sandinistas' guerrilla war in Nicaragua to topple the regime of Gen. Anastasio Somoza. During the day, I was dodging bullets and, after sundown, guzzling prodigious amounts of Jack Daniel's whiskey. Every day, I consumed at least two packs of John Player Specials cigarettes.

But among the foreign press corps, there were a few people who smoked cigars, mostly Joya de Nicaragua, which in those days was owned by the Somoza family. One of the most notable, and easily recognized,



was Alan Riding, a *New York Times* correspondent. I honestly can't remember if he and a cigar were inseparable, but in those late evenings in a hotel bar, I remember the picture of him with a big double corona Joya sticking out of his mouth. And, of course, like any aspiring young reporter, I looked up to Mr. Riding.

The actual moment I picked up, or was

offered a cigar, has been lost in the mist of those Jack Daniel's infused nights. But I do recall that it was a Joya de Nicaragua Churchill size. Since I didn't keel over and pass out from trying to smoke it like a cigarette, I also have a vague recollection of being taught a few of the fundamentals. I do have a clear memory that the wrapper on that big cigar was a beautiful reddish-brown, a classic colorado, and it was smooth and even. My love of cigars began that night in Nicaragua in 1978.

I have been blessed in my life, in more ways that I can even begin to count. But one area where I have been truly lucky is in my career writing and reporting about cigars. I have met great people, many of whom are close personal friends. And I have smoked so many great cigars that to pick the best one is virtually impossible.

There was the 1992 Partagás Lusitania given to me by Max Gutmann of Mexico. There was a 1986 Davidoff No. 1 Especial, given to me by Edward Sahakian. Montecristo No. 2s with 20 years age. Cohiba Lanceros from the 1980s. A Dunhill Don Candido handed over to me by Ajay Patel. My first Cohiba Behike, in 2010, which was our Cigar of the Year.

But like so many things, a great cigar can be enhanced by when and where you smoke it. So, my best cigar was a 1492, a special cigar produced by the Cubans to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of the Americas. And, fittingly, the cigar was given to me by Marvin R. Shanken, my employer of 26 years.

The setting was perfect. I was in the Canadian Rockies, at a backcountry outpost called Lake O'Hara Lodge. It was a cool but clear evening, and the year was 2000. I had finished a lovely dinner with my wife, Donna. I asked for a glass of Port, and I retired to a small outdoor porch, wearing a fleece to ward off the evening's chill. The spot has an unfettered view of Lake O'Hara surrounded by the peaks of Mount Huber, Mount Victoria and the Yukness Ledges. The late glow of dusk lit the snow-covered peaks.

I lit up the 1492, which isn't a big cigar, but rather a corona gorda size. From the very first puff, I knew I was smoking something special. The balance was perfect.

And, the flavors highlighted the best of the great Cuban cigars—pungent, earthy, but balanced off with some dark cocoa bean notes. A truly great cigar.

And, given the setting, worthy of my personal tag: My Best Cigar.

Jack Bettridge

Senior Features Editor

My first cigar was something of a fizzle. It was the late 1970s, and I was living in Berkeley, California, of all places, which at the time was on the vanguard of regulating personal liberty. On my way home from work one day, I passed a tobacconist and was curious



about the exotic wares (pipes, cigars and other paraphernalia) within. So I entered and chatted up the manager, who told me that a groundbreaking new law was about to make places like his establishment the only venues in the city in which one could smoke. Even as I didn't smoke at the time, the anarchist that lurked within me was rankled at just another encroachment on choice. So I let the purveyor romance me with tales of luxurious tobacco grown on sunny Caribbean isles or under shade in Connecticut—despite that at the time my customer profile would have leaned toward buying rolling papers or a pipe.

Ultimately, he suggested a cigar for me, which he said was a good introductory smoke: not too strong, but still flavorful. The cost? The then grand sum of \$2.

I took it home and pulled it out in front of my roommates, who I had assumed would admire my choice with fascination. Instead I was faced with derision. Some of my housemates were the sorts of poseurs who smoked fancy, stink-bomb cigarettes imported from France. I'd always put up with their smoking, even while silently being repulsed, but ironically they all complained of the smell of my innocent cigar. When I'd had all the haranguing I could take, I took it outside. Today, I don't even remember the brand—just the banishment.

That original cigar experience paled in comparison to my best cigar moment. That came some 20 years later as an ah-ha moment with tobacco. When I came to work at CIGAR AFICIONADO I was hired for my editorial experience with non-cigar subjects, not for any expertise on cigars—I'd only sampled a dozen or so at the time. The cigars that I'd smoked up to that point were not of any great consequence—the sort of machine-rolled cigars that guys pass out to celebrate a birth or to puff on at poker games to keep the distaff population down. But I wanted to learn, because, well, I was working for a cigar magazine and it seemed like a bad career move not to know about cigars, even though it wasn't in my official job description.

My instinct was to go to the tasting department and bum smokes. Unhappily, the person in charge of the supply gave me only subpar cigars to smoke. As much as I tried I wasn't making much headway in terms of cigar appreciation. One day I was puffing on one of those Flor de Nobodies when David Savona walked into my office and looked at me, appalled. He turned on his heels and returned momentarily with a Padrón Anniversary Exclusivo. Handing it to me, he said, "Here. Smoke a real cigar." It was the thing that turned my smoking life around. As its melange of flavors expanded on my palate I had an epiphany: "I really am tasting nuts and toast, chocolate and leather. This is it. This is the real thing." From that moment on I never looked at cigars the same way.

"I had an epiphany. I really was tasting nuts and toast, chocolate and leather. From that moment on, I never looked at cigars the same way."—JACK BETTRIDGE

Gregory Mottola

Senior Editor

I'm often asked what got me into cigars. It's the second-most asked cigar question I get, after "What's the best cigar?" to which there is no answer. There was my first cigar, of course. It was a Cuban Cohiba, and it was probably an Esplendido, but looking back I'm not so certain about the size. I do know that I enjoyed it.

A friend of mine who joined the Coast Guard had returned from Cuba and handed me a cigar with a yellow-and-black band. I knew immediately that this cigar was



supposed to be one of the best in the world. Back in the mid-'90s I remembered cigars by their color scheme. Fuente was red and green with gold in the middle. Montecristo was a beanish shade of brown. Cohiba was black and yellow, and easy to remember because both the logo and the word looked remarkably like Toshiba, font and all.

It was a large Cohiba, so I can only surmise that it was an Esplendido, or something pretending to be an Esplendido. I kept it in my pocket and waited until the bar I was working at closed that night.

It was an indoor/outdoor kind of summer place, right on the water, and by the time I was done it was about 5:30 in the morning. The sun had already come up and some of the bartenders had cigars of their own. There were cutters and lighters available, because the bar sold cigars as well as cigarettes. We all lit up and I was intrigued immediately. Each puff made me want to take another. This was where I discovered the third dimension of flavor. Food is the first, drink the second. And it also made me want to smoke again. Anything. Machine-mades, Philippine cigars, Don whatevers.

Cigars didn't become a full-fledged hobby until I found out that one of my close friends was actually a cigar connoisseur. I had no idea. We'd known each other since junior high and all these years I never knew he smoked cigars. Not seriously. As it turned out, he'd go to Spain on vacation and come back with bags full of Cuban cigars. When he saw that I was interested, he gave me a Churchill-sized Cuban La Gloria Cubana Taino, and with it, an issue of CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine. "Read this," he said. It was the issue with JFK on the cover. At that point, he became my cigar mentor and cigars for me went from being an enjoyable pastime to a passionate hobby. This was probably the most pivotal, transformative moment in my smoking history. Was it my best cigar? Tough to say, but it was the most memorable. I didn't just simply enjoy the smoke. It was the first time I actually thought about each puff.

Andrew Nagy

Associate Editor

My very first cigar, a puff or two from a Macanudo my father let me try, was memorable for its transgression, but that's about it. My first real smoke was in college, where so many first-time cigar stories seem to begin. A friend of mine had returned from winter break with a Ziplock bag of choice sticks that he had swiped from his old man's stash. I can't recall what he smoked, but I

grabbed a Joya de Nicaragua Antaño 1970, and we headed to the dorm's stoop to light up. Being January in New York, it was cold, but not freezing. We both cut way too much of the head off our smokes and lit up using cheap convenience store matches. The smoke was plentiful, but most impor-



tant, those cigars facilitated a moment where my friend and I could share our ambitions for our last semester in school before being thrust into the real world.

The 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver led me to my finest cigar moment. The United States was slated to play Canada in the Gold Medal game. Both rosters were stacked with NHL talent ready to play their hearts out for their respective countries: It would be a game no hockey fan could afford to miss. The Cigar Inn, at the time run by the Fakih brothers, was having a party for the game, so I headed there to watch. I was smoking a Padrón Family Reserve No. 45 Maduro. The place was packed, the game was on all of the televisions, and there was plenty of food, drink and cigars. I can still remember all of us chanting "U-S-A! U-S-A!" after scrappy

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Zach Parise tied the game up with only seconds left in regulation to force overtime. The boys in blue would end up losing that day, but what a game it was.

David Clough

*Assistant Editor/
Tasting Coordinator*

I was 18 years old. Graduation day from high school. I remember leaving the ceremony and saying goodbye to my parents and stepping out into the parking lot with my friend Charlie.

"Let's get out of here," Charlie said.

We made it to the car and drove off. There were graduation parties to attend, but not until later. We had time to kill and cigars in the glovebox. There was no cigar cutter, so we used our teeth. We didn't know the first thing about cigars, only that we wanted to celebrate. The windows were down and we lit up and smoked.



I remember barreling down the long and winding Connecticut back roads, woods all around us, thinking about the upcoming year at college, thinking about the end of high school, driving fast and

blasting out from under the tree line where the sky opened up to farmlands and green fields. Sunlight gleaming off the hood of the car like a crazy knife. The Rolling Stones were on the radio and the world stretched out before us in all directions. We were high-school graduates, and life seemed full of possibility. We laughed, turned the radio higher, puffed at the cigars. I felt like a giant. It was the first cigar I'd ever smoked.

Flash forward to my second year at CIGAR AFICIONADO. I went to Massachusetts for a long summer weekend. There's a small island off the coast that's speckled with beach cottages. My parents own a cottage on the island, and every winter it's battered by ugly ocean storms—salt water, sand and razor-sharp winds. The spring and the summer months are for repainting, repairing and beating back the elements.

I was helping my dad with the yard and the house. With the hot sun pouring down, we ripped out old boards that had rotted away from the side of the cottage. We cut new wood, hammered and nailed, repainted. Then on to the yard, mowing, weeding, trimming back the rose bushes. We worked all day.

When we finished the sun was setting out over the ocean. Seagulls wheeled overhead and there was a warm breeze coming in off the water. We got the grill going and cracked open two cans of beer. I told my dad that I'd brought some Cuban cigars from work.

"We should smoke them," my dad said.

I went into the house and grabbed the cigars. They were Montecristo No. 3s. I took out my cutter and lighter and handed them to my dad. We lit up and sat on the porch and stared at the ocean. We took one half of a sun-bleached clamshell, about the size of a fist, and used it as an ashtray. It felt good to sit there, muscles aching, sunburned and tired with a can of cold beer and a cigar. Just sitting next to my dad looking at the water with the sound of the waves coming in. It was the best cigar I've ever had.

"Muscles aching, sunburned and tired, with a can of cold beer and a cigar. Just sitting next to my dad, looking at the water. Best cigar I've ever had." —DAVID CLOUGH

Blake Droesch

Assistant Editor

I've always enjoyed cigars because of the environment they bring. Whether walking the golf course, wading a stream—with my fishing rod in one hand, a cigar in the other—or puffing alone on a late night stroll around New York, it wasn't so much the taste of a cigar I appreciated at first, but the relaxing moments they seemed to complement so well. Truth be told, it wasn't until I began working at CIGAR AFICIONADO that I first learned to appreciate good tobacco and the taste of a well-blended cigar.

There is one cigar in particular that sticks with me, an Ashton Virgin Sun



Grown Torpedo given to me by my colleague, assistant editor David Clough, during my first month at the magazine. On a lazy Sunday afternoon I smoked it to the nub while sitting in the backyard of a friend's apartment. Almost immediately, I was able to tell that this cigar was superior to the others I had tried. The construction was pristine, the draw smooth as butter, and the smoke had a rich, distinct flavor. There have been many cigars since then—some better, many worse—but it's that lone Ashton that I come back to again and again, resonating in my mind as the best cigar I've ever had. ❖



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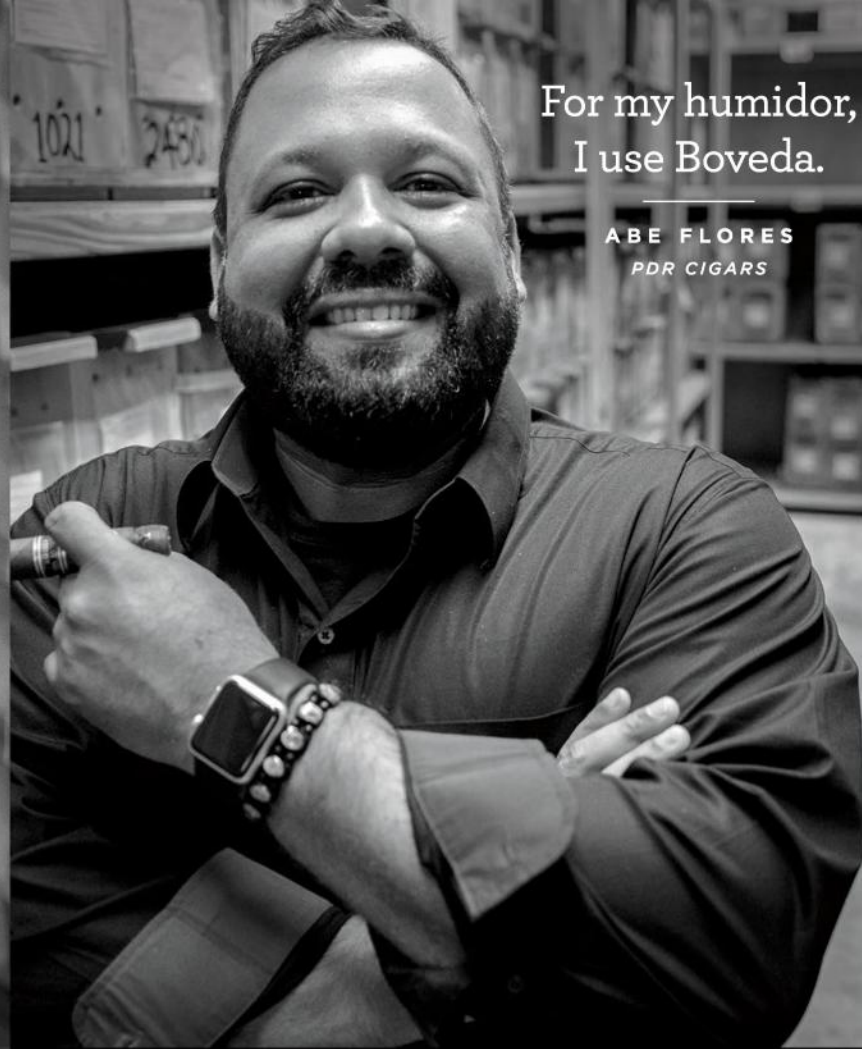
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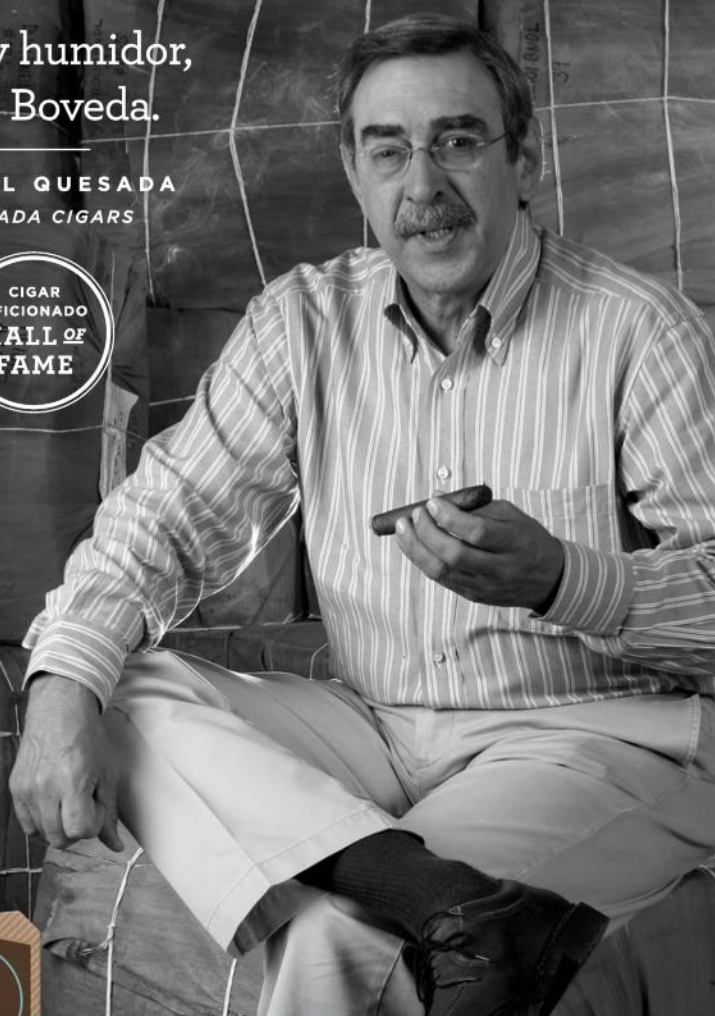
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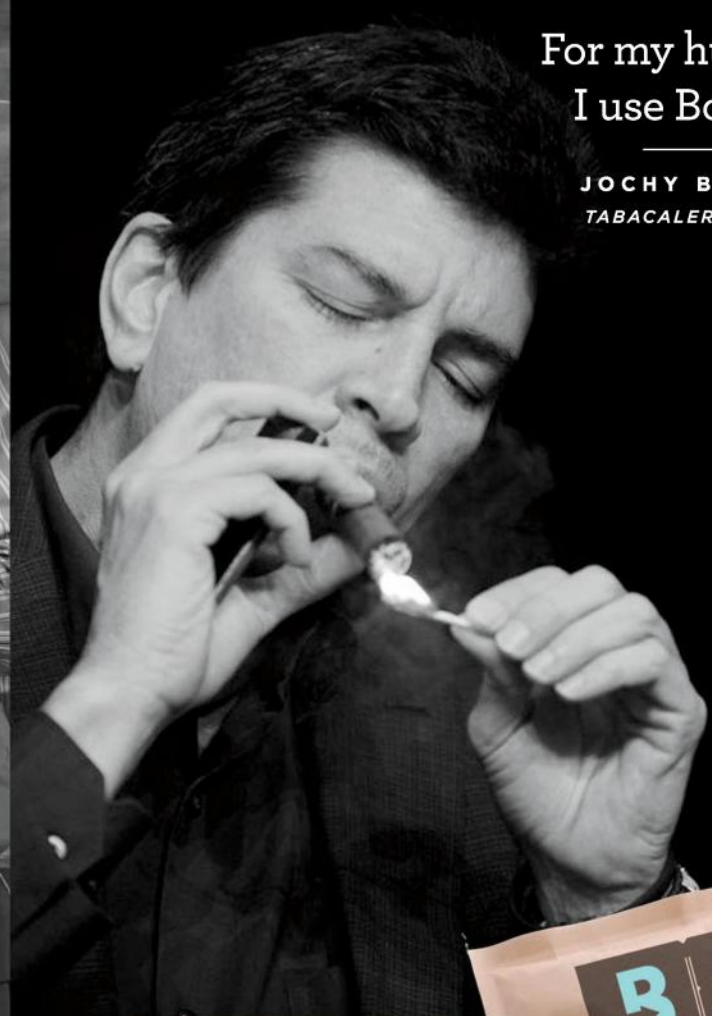
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The Classics

Cigars that rated 95 points and higher in CIGAR AFICIONADO blind reviews

Have you ever wondered—what are the highest rated cigars of all time? Wonder no more. These 41 smokes are the crème de la crème of the CIGAR AFICIONADO blind tastings, each with a “classic” rating of 95 points or higher in a standard CIGAR AFICIONADO review. (This list does not factor in scores from our Connoisseur’s Corner reviews of vintage cigars.) The standout is the Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona, which earned a near-perfect 99 points in our Winter 1992 issue. The top of the list also contains three 97-point giants: Cohiba Behike BHK 52, My Father Le Bijou 1922 Torpedo Box Pressed and Padrón Serie 1926 No. 9. The remainder of the list features a variety of exceptionally complex and flavorful cigars, all of them gems, including fan favorites such as Cohiba, Fuente Fuente OpusX and Padrón Family Reserve. In the 25 years of this magazine’s publication, only 12 cigars have scored 96 points; only 25 have earned 95 points. —David Clough



99 Points

Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona
Winter 1992

97 Points

Cohiba Behike BHK 52
2010 Cigar of the Year

My Father Le Bijou 1922 Torpedo Box Pressed
2015 Cigar of the Year

Padrón Serie 1926 No. 9
2007 Cigar of the Year

96 Points

Alec Bradley Prensado Churchill
2011 Cigar of the Year

Cohiba Robusto
Autumn 1992

Cohiba Siglo V
Spring 1993

Flor de las Antillas Toro
2012 Cigar of the Year

Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona
Spring 1995

La Flor de Cano Short Churchill
Autumn 1992

La Flor Dominicana Andalusian Bull
2016 Cigar of the Year

Montecristo No. 2
2013 Cigar of the Year

Oliva Serie V Melanio Figurado
2014 Cigar of the Year

Padrón Serie 1926 80 Years Maduro
2008 No. 2

Punch Double Corona
December 1999

Ramon Allones Specially Selected
2015 No. 2

95 Points

Aging Room Quattro F55 Concerto
2013 No. 2

CAO Flathead V660 Carb
2015 No. 3

Cohiba 1966 Edición Limitada 2011
2012 No. 2

Cohiba Esplendido
April 2017

Cohiba Siglo III
Spring 1993

Cohiba Behike BHK 54
June 2013

Davidoff Nicaragua Toro
2013 No. 3

E.P. Carrillo La Historia E-III
2014 No. 2

Fuente Fuente OpusX Belicoso XXX
2010 No. 3

Fuente Fuente OpusX Double Corona
2005 Cigar of the Year

Fuente Fuente OpusX PerfecXion No. 2
2007 No. 2

Illusione Fume d'Amour Clementes
2014 No. 3

La Aroma de Cuba Mi Amor Belicoso
2011 No. 2

La Flor Dominicana Salomon
April 2009

Montecristo No. 2
June 2000

Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series “A”
June 2009

Padrón Family Reserve No. 45 Maduro
2009 Cigar of the Year

Padrón Family Reserve No. 45 Natural
2010 No. 4

Padrón Family Reserve No. 44 Natural
December 2011

Padrón Serie 1926 80 Years Maduro
April 2008

Partagás Serie P No. 2
December 2011

Punch Double Corona
July 21, 2015 *Cigar Insider*

Rocky Patel Decade Torpedo
June 2008

Rocky Patel Sun Grown Maduro Robusto
2016 No. 2

Viaje Oro Reserva VOR No. 5
2010 No. 2

cigar aficionado HALL of FAME

BY ANDREW NAGY



The 19 members of CIGAR AFICIONADO's exclusive Hall of Fame may come from varying backgrounds, but all of them share two traits that success is built upon: passion and drive. Each of these men, titans of the cigar industry in their respective ways, overcame a host of obstacles to reach the top of the premium cigar business.

The Hall of Fame's origins date back to 1997, when CIGAR AFICIONADO magazine invited more than 400 people to the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Manhattan to honor six legends of the cigar world: Edgar M. Cullman (1918–2011), Zino Davidoff (1906–1994), Carlos Fuente Sr. (1936–2016), Frank Llana (1920–2010),

Stanford Newman (1916–2006) and Angel Oliva Sr. (1907–1996). Though none of the members of this inaugural Hall of Fame class remain alive, each is fondly remembered by all those in the cigar industry whose lives they touched.

In 2012, we inducted nine additional members at the Grand Havana Room in New York City: Carlos Fuente Jr., Hendrik Kelner, Robert Levin, Benjamin Menendez, José Orlando Padrón, Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, Nestor Plasencia, Manuel Quesada and José Seijas.

In 2016, during CIGAR AFICIONADO's Night to Remember dinner, we added three new members to the Hall: cigarmakers Litto Gomez, Jorge Padrón and Rocky Patel.



Edgar M. Cullman

CLASS OF 1997
1918–2011

In 1961, Cullman assembled a group of investors and bought General Cigar Co., which was then mainly a producer of machine-made cigars. Cullman would elevate the company into a major player in the premium cigar category on the backs of two anchor brands: Macanudo, and the non-Cuban version of Partagas.



Zino Davidoff

CLASS OF 1997
1906–1994

After stints working in the tobacco fields of South America and Cuba, Zino Davidoff returned home to Geneva in 1929 to open a shop. He quickly earned a loyal and elite clientele, and after striking a deal with Cuba, created his eponymous Davidoff cigar brand, whose reputation is synonymous with luxury.



Carlos Fuente Sr.

CLASS OF 1997
1935–2016

When Carlos Fuente Sr. bought his father's small cigar business for \$1 in 1958, it was selling only a few thousand cigars. Fuente Sr. would catapult Tabacalera A. Fuente y Cia. into an international cigar empire, presiding over such storied brands as Arturo Fuente and Fuente Fuente OpusX along the way.



Frank Llaneza

CLASS OF 1997
1920–2010

Llaneza assumed leadership of his father's Villazon & Co. in 1953, and within a decade it was an industry giant. Llaneza accomplished much, including pioneering the cigar industry in Honduras by carving tobacco farms in the wild and introducing consumers to heavier smokes via Hoyo de Monterrey and Punch, two Honduran brands he helped create.



Stanford Newman

CLASS OF 1997
1916–2006

For more than 40 years, Newman oversaw the operations of the J.C. Newman Cigar Co., established by his family in 1895. Under his guidance, the company became the sole large producer of cigars in Tampa, Florida, making cigars on antiquated machines, and he forged a joint venture with the Fuente family for the company's handmade cigars.



Angel Oliva Sr.

CLASS OF 1997
1906–1996

Nine years after Oliva Sr. emigrated from Cuba to the United States, he founded Oliva Tobacco Co., whose fields span the Americas and the Caribbean. His tobaccos would end up being used to start some of the finest handmade brands in the world, including Arturo Fuente, non-Cuban Punch and Miami-made La Gloria Cubana.



Carlos Fuente Jr.

CLASS OF 2012

Carlos “Carlito” Fuente Jr., one of the most recognizable faces in the premium cigar world, is an accomplished innovator. His Arturo Fuente Hemingway line helped revive the perfecto shape, and the introduction of his full-bodied Fuente Fuente OpusX brand in 1995 proved that quality wrapper leaf could be grown in the Dominican Republic.



Hendrik Kelner

CLASS OF 2012

Born and raised in a tobacco family, Kelner has fittingly been called a tobacco master by many. For nearly 30 years, he oversaw the production of Davidoff and Avo as president of Tabadom Holding Inc., and is known for his ceaseless study of tobacco subjects like soil content, climates, fermentation, blending and cigar rolling.



Robert Levin

CLASS OF 2012

Levin once swept the floors of his father’s Holt’s Cigar Store, and now he owns that retail shop. Levin forged new ground for the Philadelphia retailer, creating the Ashton brand in 1985 and turning a small business into an industry powerhouse, with cigar retail, wholesale and distribution operations.



Benjamin Menendez

CLASS OF 2012

Menendez has created cigars in nearly every cigar-producing country. He got his start in his father’s H. Upmann cigar factory in Cuba, where Montecristos were made. Forced out by Castro, Menendez has worked for General Cigar and Altadis, producing non-Cuban brands such as Partagas, Macanudo, Montecristo and Romeo y Julieta.



José Orlando Padrón

CLASS OF 2012

When Padrón, a Cuban immigrant, rented a Miami storefront in 1964 to make cigars, little did he know it would one day grow into Nicaragua’s highest-rated brand. Padrón has overcome many challenges—embargoes, factory relocations, even assassination attempts—to build one of the world’s most respected names in cigars.



Ernesto Perez-Carrillo

CLASS OF 2012

It was 1982 when Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, inspired by a Cuban Davidoff, began working on La Gloria Cubana, and a decade later the brand would become a national sensation. A true master blender, Perez-Carrillo would sell his El Credito Cigars operation and eventually strike off to form his own EPC Cigar Co.



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Nestor Plasencia
CLASS OF 2012

The cigarmaking empire of Plasencia spans Nicaragua and Honduras, employs thousands of people, and produces tens of millions of cigars a year. His clients include popular brands such as Rocky Patel, Alec Bradley and Casa Magna, along with many others, making Plasencia one of the most influential men in the cigar industry.


Manuel Quesada
CLASS OF 2012

Quesada became the first cigar manufacturer to work out of the Santiago Free Trade Zone when he erected his Manufactura de Tabacos S.A. cigar factory in 1974. A Vietnam veteran and Cuban immigrant, Quesada has produced numerous brands, the most popular being Fonseca, Casa Magna and Quesada.


José Seijas
CLASS OF 2012

Seijas studied industrial engineering before landing a job at Tabacalera de Garcia at the age of 24. He played a major role in converting the huge facility from a tobacco processor into a full-fledged cigar factory that rolls Dominican versions of Montecristo, H. Upmann and Romeo y Julieta, and today he oversees production of La Matilde cigars.


Litto Gomez
CLASS OF 2016

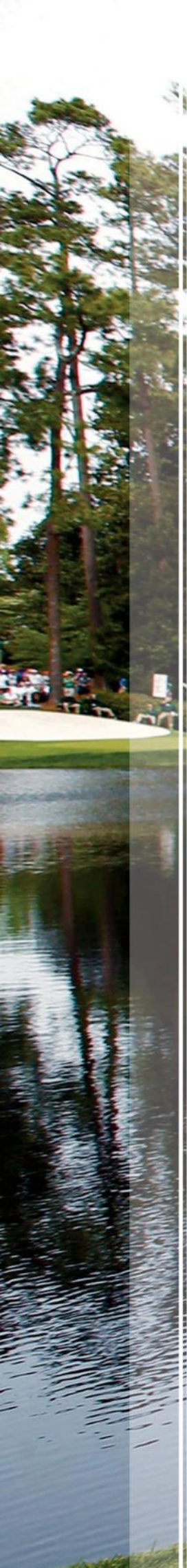
When Gomez entered the cigar industry in 1994, he was a virtual newcomer. Twenty-two years later, Gomez now grows his own tobacco and has transformed his La Flor Dominicana mark from an unknown entity into a cigar brand embraced by connoisseurs and critics alike for its powerhouse blends and innovative vitolas.


Jorge Padrón
CLASS OF 2016

When Padrón graduated business school and began working full time in the family business, 90 percent of the company's sales were concentrated in Miami. Padrón was able to develop a new, younger customer base and expand distribution. He also spurred the creation of the Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series, the company's first ultra-premium brand.


Rocky Patel
CLASS OF 2016

A survivor of the cigar boom, Rakesh Patel, better known as Rocky, was not born into a legacy tobacco family, but in India. He is widely regarded as the hardest working person in the cigar industry, and his work ethic has helped him grow from selling 150,000 cigars in his first year to nearly 20 million cigars annually.



Generation NEXT

Many of golf's biggest stars are in their 20s,
and despite competing on the links,
many are quite friendly off the course

BY JEFF WILLIAMS

When 24-year-old Justin Thomas walked off the 18th green at Quail Hollow as the winner of the PGA Championship in August, waiting for him on his way to the scoring office was Jordan Spieth and Rickie Fowler. Smiles, handshakes and hugs abounded for the newly minted major championship winner.

It was a gathering of "The Nexus" of the Next Generation of Golf, three of the best and brightest who have fully arrived and have taken over the reins of the game in the second decade of the 21st century. And in doing so, their play, their prospects and their presence signal that the Tiger Era is over.

For the better part of 15 years, Tiger Woods ruled golf. With 14 major championships, 79 PGA Tour victories, more than \$100 million in earnings and \$1 billion in endorsements, Woods cast a broad shadow across the golf landscape even as he enlivened it. Yet over the last nine years, a personal scandal, injuries and serious back surgeries have taken him from the pinnacle and out of the game.

Inevitably his era would have ended, it just ended quicker than anyone expected. But there's no question that the likes of Spieth, Thomas, Fowler, Rory McIlroy, Jason Day and Hideki Matsuyama are supremely talented and infectiously likable players who have stepped into the vacated spotlight, ready to shine entirely on their own in ways that are quite different than that of Tiger.

Unlike Woods, whose legendary game was shielded with a Teflon personality, today's players are open, approachable and social media savvy, a combination that makes them just right for the Internet age. They aren't afraid to put themselves out there, not hesitant to connect with the fans in a way maybe not seen since the great Arnold Palmer. (Although we have to give Phil Mickelson props in that regard.)

The era of Tiger Woods may be over, but golf's future is bright with the emergence of young studs Justin Thomas, left, Jordan Spieth, center, and Rickie Fowler. The three have been competing against each other since they were teenagers, developing a friendship during that time.





When Thomas, wearing a pink shirt, aced the fourth hole during the Par-3 Contest prior to the start of the 2016 Masters Tournament, longtime friends Spieth, left, and Fowler, wearing grey, were the first to celebrate the feat. Fowler then stepped up to the tee and drilled a hole in one of his own.

As the great Ernie Els, who knows all too well how big a shadow Woods cast, said when asked about today's young players fortifying and growing the game: "They get it."

Just look at what they've done.

Spieth, just 24, won his first British Open this past July and his third major championship following wins at the 2015 Masters and U.S. Open. Thomas has had a breakout season, winning five tournaments through September including the PGA, his first major. He also shot a 59 at the Hawaiian Open and a nine-under-par 63 at the U.S. Open, the lowest score relative to par in tournament history. McIlroy, 28, battling injury this season, still has a formidable record with four majors. Twenty-nine-year-old Jason Day has the 2015 PGA Championship to his credit along with four other wins that season. Fowler has yet to win a major, though the 28-year-old has been in the mix and won the 2015 Players Championship in impressive fashion. Matsuyama has won five PGA Tour events and is consistently found near the top of the leaderboards, with a major championship almost certainly on the horizon.

But here's the thing: When they got to the tour, they were ready for it. There were no deer-in-the-headlights moments, no backing off of the shots needed to win, no shying away from the responsibilities of the game.

Jim Furyk, who fashioned an accomplished career in Woods' shadow, is the 2018 U.S. Ryder Cup captain. He gets to play with the Next Generation and in his role as captain gets to analyze them. He is impressed.

"You could see it coming a few years ago of how many good, young players we have. They're more prepared," Furyk said this summer at the Hartford tournament. "They're ready to win at an earlier age than we were two decades ago, three decades ago.

"I mean, when I came out in the early '90s, it was rare that more than one guy out of college would get a card. No one could. Phil Mickelson didn't quit school early to turn pro. He won a tour event when he was a junior in college and stayed for his senior year. So those things didn't happen, but these kids are coming out younger, at an earlier age and getting more prepared."

Tiger set the standards physically and mentally for being prepared for the game of golf. But Woods was always a solitary figure on the Tour, not known to socialize with other players or walk head first into crowds that adored him. You never saw him walking arm-in-arm with Mickelson, his primary protagonist, heard of him hanging around the clubhouse for long chitchat with fellow competitors, or watched him sign 15 minutes of autographs. And he didn't wait around the scoring tent to congratulate the winner. If he was the loser, he was gone. The private jet was wheels up before the winner could lift his trophy.

But here were Spieth and Fowler waiting in their civvies for Thomas to walk off as the new PGA Champion. They had come up through the junior ranks together, trying to beat each other's brains out, and in the process driving each other to get better. These are players who embrace the camaraderie of the game as much as they do the competition. With the Next Generation, the spoils of victory are friendship.

"It's awesome and I think they know I would do the same for them," said Thomas after winning the PGA. "It's a cool little friendship we have. I know Rickie was a couple groups in front and Jordan was probably through nine or something when I finished. But I think that kind of shows where the game is right now, where all of us are. I mean, we obviously all want to win. We want to beat the other person. But if we can't win, we at least want to enjoy it with our friends. I think that we'll all be able to enjoy this together, and

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The Big Ten of Golf's NEXT GENERATION



1. Jordan Spieth

Age: 24

Born: Dallas, Texas

College: University of Texas at Austin (1 ½ years)

PGA Tour wins: 11

Majors: 3

Thought he was ready after 1 ½ years of college, and he was. Probably best putter on tour, at least from 20 feet or more, and that guarantees success.



2. Justin Thomas

Age: 24

Born: Louisville, Kentucky

College: University of Alabama (two years)

PGA Tour wins: 6

Majors: 1

Had breakthrough season with five victories, including the PGA Championship, culminated by capturing the FedEx Cup.



3. Rickie Fowler

Age: 28

Born: Murrieta, California

College: Oklahoma State University (two years)

PGA Tour wins: 4

Still looking for his first major championship and showed capabilities in the 2014 season when he finished in the top five of all four majors.



4. Rory McIlroy

Age: 28

Born: Holywood, Northern Ireland

College: Did not attend

PGA Tour wins: 13

Majors: 4

Came out of Northern Ireland as a mop-haired prodigy. Extremely big hitter who is a streaky player. When he's on a streak, watch out.



5. Jason Day

Age: 29

Born: Beaudesert, Queensland, Australia

College: Did not attend

PGA Tour wins: 10

Majors: 1

Day took a while to develop and gain focus, but when he did he absolutely shot to the top of the game.



6. Hideki Matsuyama

Age: 25

Born: Ehime, Japan

College: Tohoku Fukushi University

PGA Tour wins: 5

Matsuyama's pause at the top of his backswing is unique, and the power he generates from a dead stop, wondrous.



7. Patrick Reed

Age: 27

Born: San Antonio, Texas

College: University of Georgia/Augusta University

PGA Tour wins: 5

Seems best when it comes down to one-on-one battles. Makes him a supreme Ryder and Presidents Cup player.



8. Daniel Berger

Age: 24

Born: Plantation, Florida

College: Florida State University (Two Years)

PGA Tour wins: 2

Son of a former pro tennis player, Berger serves up a streaky game that makes him unpredictable but never to be discounted.



9. Brooks Koepka

Age: 27

Born: West Palm Beach, Florida

College: Florida State University

PGA Tour wins: 2

Majors: 1

Took apart Erin Hills to win U.S. Open. Took the European route to develop his game to PGA Tour standards.



10. Bryson DeChambeau

Age: 23

Born: Modesto, California

College: Southern Methodist University

PGA Tour wins: 1

The most technically-driven of all young players. Uses same shaft length for all of his irons with extremely upright lie.

I know it's going to make them more hungry, just like it did me."

Thomas and Fowler were staying in a rental house with Spieth at the Open at Royal Birkdale. But hanging out together and civility doesn't mean these competitors don't want to win. Spieth's British Open victory (aided by the most epic penalty drop in history) just dug into Thomas big time. Was he frustrated?

"Frustration probably isn't the right word. Jealousy definitely is. I mean, there's no reason to hide it," he says. "I was jealous that Sergio [Garcia] won [the Masters]; that Brooks [Koepka] won [the U.S. Open];

that Jordan won. I wanted to be doing that, and I wasn't."

Three weeks later, Spieth couldn't come up with a second straight major at the PGA, but that disappointment didn't factor into his decision to stay around to congratulate Thomas.

"He's one of my best friends. We've been going at it since we were 13 years old," says Spieth. "Speaking of the younger generation and sticking around to congratulate Justin, we realize how hard it is to win and how difficult it is to win a major. I've played so many rounds, practiced so much with Justin and with Rickie. It's the least I can do.



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I've experienced the joy they are having. I know what Justin is feeling. Just three weeks before I experienced that same feeling at the British Open. It was his first major and I remembered that feeling. You are just so happy for your buddy. It's not rivalries. Think of your best friend and being able to experience the highs of their life."

There is a bit of a caveat to Spieth and Fowler hanging around.

"As younger guys, we don't have families, we don't have wives and kids we're traveling with," says Spieth. "It will be a different story moving on. But if we can be there, we'll be there." Then, he adds with a smile, "But if we're done early and you have a couple of screaming kids..."

Fowler still hasn't broken the major barrier and says that the buddy-thing doesn't lessen his desire to put a pounding on his friends.

"It's fun to see your buddies play well," Fowler says. "But at the same time, it's even more satisfying when you get to go out and beat all of your buddies. [Justin Thomas' major] is only going to make me want to beat him more."

The Next Generation also includes winners like Patrick Reed, Daniel Berger, and a really bright new star on the horizon, Jon Rahm.

Early in the season, the 22-year-old Rahm won the Farmers Insurance Open and in July the Spaniard showed his versatility by winning the Irish Open with a record score on the links of Portstewart. He has a quick, extremely powerful swing—think Nick Price in his prime and 50 yards longer.

Rahm played at Arizona State, Mickelson's alma mater and where his brother Tim was the golf coach. Tim Mickelson is now Rahm's agent. Phil the Thrill has played a few rounds with Rahm and wasn't hesitant to express an opinion on the young Rahm's future after he won at San Diego.

"I've played a couple times with him, and let's just say I will only be his partner from now on," says Mickelson. "I haven't been able to beat him."

Mickelson piled on heaps of admiration. "Jon doesn't have weaknesses," says Mickelson. "Every part of his game is a strength. I think he's one of the best players in the world. He's more than just a good young player. I think there's an intangible that some guys have where they want to have the pressure put on them, they want to be in that tough position, they want to have everything fall on their shoulders. And he has that."

Hideki Matsuyama is on track to become the first Japanese player to win a major championship, and certainly the best player from his country since Isao Aoki. Ernie Els played with Matsuyama at this past PGA Championship and comes away with a certain sense of awe.

"I remember in my prime and a lot of other guys' primes when you needed it there was that 20 yards and he's got that ability," says Els.



Fowler, left, and Thomas, like the rest of the Next Generation, embrace interacting with fans via social media.

"Off the course, we're just a bunch of guys who like to hang out together," says Spieth. "And you know what? We smoke a few cigars, too."

"When you have that kind of firepower, he's got an extra gear. He plays within himself and then can let it go. The whole package is there."

And there's more, the intangible that exists beyond the swing. "There's not really any flaws in (the swing and) he's not scared of the lead," says Els.

From his view at the top of the game, as a four-time major championship winner and all-around good guy for the game of golf, Els, now 47, thinks the sport has a bright future as he and his generation pass the baton. Els is particularly impressed that the Next Generation embodies the spirit of all generations, reaching out to the fans in the most personable of sports, starting their own foundations, embracing the charitable component of the game. Els is deeply involved with charitable

works through his Els for Autism Foundation, which is chaired by Marvin R. Shanken, editor publisher of CIGAR AFICIONADO.

Els was once asked for his thoughts on the young players who were going to participate in the Pro-Am. "These young players have it all," said Els. "They are talented, smart, good people. They know how to give back. Justin is playing in my event and I really appreciate how this young man gives back. With players like Justin and Jordan, and there are a lot of others, too, the game is in good hands."

As these young golfers embrace the spotlight in their own unique way, Woods now seems far more connected to the Next Generation than he was to his own. After Thomas won the PGA, Woods sent him congratulations and invited him for dinner at his restaurant. Thomas found it "surreal" that Woods wanted to hang out with him in Florida.

"I probably got just as much joy out of that as I did winning, which is just bizarre to say and probably for you all to hear me say," Thomas said at the Northern Trust, the first FedExCup play-

off event. "It's just really cool. [Woods] has taken an unbelievable role with some of us young guys and wanting to help us if he can." Beyond his ability and titles, Woods' legacy in the great game of golf may, oddly enough, evolve to include that of mentor to the Next Generation.

Though it seems that they don't need much of it, this Next Generation of golf superstars is willing and able to help each other through their close-knit bonds. Heck, they even vacation together. Instagram and Twitter posts show players like Spieth, Thomas and Fowler together in the Bahamas, jumping off of yachts.

"There is a genuine like for each other," says Spieth. "Off the course, we're just a bunch of guys who like to hang out together. And you know what? We smoke a few cigars, too."

The Next Generation of great players is also the Next Generation of cigar aficionados. ♦

Jeff Williams is a contributing editor of CIGAR AFICIONADO.

THE BEST OF Time IN 2017

Retro aesthetics, high-performance materials and a bit of wow factor highlight this year's foremost entrants in the world of watches

BY LAURIE KAHLE



After riding out the past few years in a challenging sales climate, mainstream watch brands continue to put emphasis on value propositions with scaled-back pricing and a heavy presence of less-expensive stainless steel cases and straightforward classic designs that are, in some cases, directly derived from historic models. Retro was clearly the loudest watchword of the year, yet some brands have their sights set on the future with cutting-edge aesthetics and avant-garde, high-performance materials.

Of course, there are always a number of big wows for a select few of the world's elite collectors. Greubel Forsey unveiled its first Grande Sonnerie, a horological tour de force 11 years in the making and priced at 1.2 million Swiss francs (\$1.2 million). A. Lange & Söhne strutted its technical stuff with the Tourbillon Perpetual Pour le Mérite, which integrates a perpetual calendar, split-seconds chronograph and tourbillon, plus a chain and fusée constant force regulator in a half-million-dollar masterpiece. And the always visionary

MB&F also ventured into \$500,000 deep space with the fantastical sapphire crystal HM6 "Space Pirate" Alien Nation, a sci-fi spaceship of a watch manned by six tiny alien figures hand-carved in white gold.

While these spectacular grail watches surely make our hearts beat faster with their exceptional beauty and audacious technical firepower, they are extremely rare and incredibly expensive outliers—albeit highly successful ones—in a market that is looking to capture the hearts and dollars of mere-mortal enthusiasts. Still, any annual roundup of standout watches would be lacking without a few showstoppers in the mix.

VACHERON CONSTANTIN

On that note, Vacheron Constantin's one-of-a-kind Celestia (about \$1 million) makes an unprecedented link between state-of-the-art watchmaking and the ancient notion of measuring time with the observation of celestial bodies. Master watchmaker Jean-Marie Bouquin spent five years developing this horological knockout with a remarkable 23 mostly astronomical complications on two dials, the most complicated wristwatch the brand has ever produced. The fully integrated movement with three separate gear trains and six barrels packs 514 components into a mechanism that measures a mere 8.7-mm thick. Its functions include a running equation of time (tracking the difference between solar and civil time), tidal cycles, sunrise and sunset, length of day and night, seasons, solstices, equinoxes, positioning of the Earth, moon and sun, zodiac signs, and there's even a star chart for the northern hemisphere displaying the Milky Way on the back. Though Celestia was not commissioned by a client, it emerged from the brand's special-order Les Cabinotiers department as a statement of what it is capable of producing for VIP clients. Vacheron sold the first and took orders for six variations, so each will be unique. vacheron-constantin.com

VACHERON CONSTANTIN





RICHARD MILLE



HUBLOT



PATEK PHILIPPE

RICHARD MILLE

A pioneer in introducing high-tech materials—often borrowed from the worlds of Formula 1 and aeronautics—Richard Mille ups the exotic-substance ante with the RM 50-03 Tourbillon Split Seconds Chronograph Ultralight McLaren F1 (\$980,000, limited to 75 pieces). The use of Graph TPT (a graphene composite) makes it the world's lightest mechanical chronograph weighing in at an astonishing 40 grams including the graphene-infused strap. Graphene was isolated in 2004 at the University of Manchester, earning two professors there a 2010 Nobel Prize in physics. The nano-material is six times lighter and 200 times stronger than steel, and the Carbon TPT blend further lowers the carbon composite's density while increasing resistance. The skeletonized movement, which weighs only 7 grams, is built using Grade 5 titanium and Carbon TPT for the baseplate and bridges to further lighten the scales. McLaren Technology Group and McLaren-Honda are currently looking to incorporate graphene into their Grand Prix cars, so in this case, Richard Mille's watch application outpaced the automotive world. richardmille.com

HUBLOT

Also collaborating with a premier automotive marque, Hublot commemorates the 70th anniversary of its partner Ferrari with the striking Techframe Ferrari 70 years Tourbillon Chronograph (\$137,000 in PEEK Carbon, as shown). To create a watch that embodies Ferrari's codes, Hublot handed the design reins to the car maker's head of design, Flavio Manzoni, and his team in Italy. They approached the project as they would a supercar, creating a lattice-like three-part modular case to serve as a lightweight yet durable chassis for the watch's high-powered engine: The

HUB6311 manual-winding single-pusher chronograph movement. To reduce size and improve ergonomics, the crown—with Ferrari's famous prancing horse—was moved to 4 o'clock, and the chrono pusher is designed as a lever at 3 o'clock in bright Ferrari red. Smaller red pushers on the sides of the case facilitate a user-friendly interchangeable strap system. Hublot will produce 70 pieces each in its proprietary King Gold, titanium, and PEEK (Polyether Ether Ketone) Carbon, a multilayer hypoallergenic material made from long carbon fibers. hublot.com

Retro was the loudest watchword of the year, yet some brands have their sights set on the future.

PATEK PHILIPPE

In stark contrast to Hublot's flash and fury, Patek Philippe stands resolute as watchmaking's reserved and refined elder statesman. This year's Ref. 5320G Perpetual Calendar (\$82,784) harks back to coveted collector's pieces from the 1940s and '50s, a golden age at Patek, which lays claim to producing the first wristwatch perpetual calendar in 1925. The creamy lacquer dial of the 5320G borrows the layout of two 1940s-era perpetuums with its double aperture for day and month at 12 o'clock and a subsidiary dial at 6 o'clock displaying analog date and moon phases, plus it adds a day/night indicator between 7 and 8 o'clock and a leap year aperture between 4 and 5 o'clock. The sleek, sculpted case with

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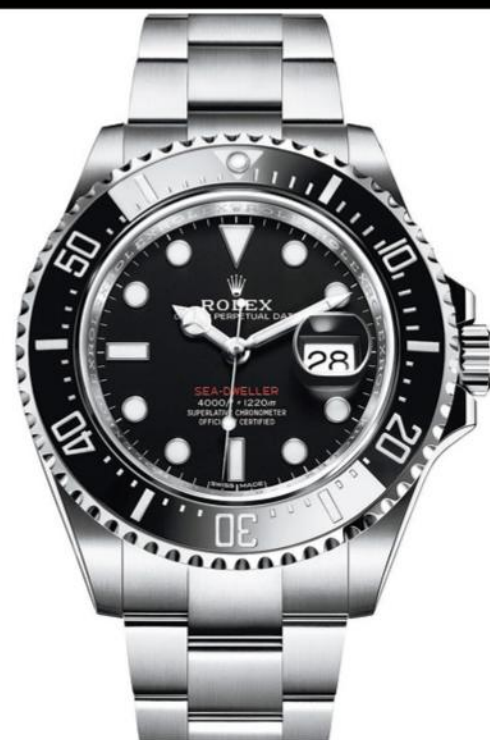
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TAG HEUER



TUDOR



ROLEX

its distinctive three-tiered lugs takes cues from the 60-year-old Ref. 2405. Despite its vintage spirit, the 5320G is state of the art under the dial with the caliber 324 S Q, an automatic movement that delivers extreme precision with a maximum rate deviation ranging between -3 and +2 seconds per day. patek.com

TAG HEUER

TAG Heuer revived its '60s-era Autavia (\$5,150 on leather strap and \$5,300 on steel bracelet) in a novel way: It held an online contest dubbed the Autavia Cup and invited enthusiasts to vote on which first-generation model they wanted to see reincarnated. More than 50,000 voters participated, and the winner was the Autavia "Rindt" worn by F1 driver Jochen Rindt, who perished on the track at Monza in 1970. The sporty collection's name is a portmanteau of auto and aviation and traces back to 1933, when Heuer designed the first dash counter for racing cars and aircraft. In 1962, Jack Heuer debuted his first chronograph wristwatch with a rotating bezel and dubbed it Autavia. The new Heuer-02 caliber chronograph movement powers the larger—42-mm—modern incarnation. An automatic, it is endowed with an 80-hour power reserve and date window at 6 O'CLOCK. Autavia's retro touches include mushroom push-pieces, a ridged crown, the original Heuer logo, a reverse panda dial design, and a distressed calfskin leather strap. tagheuer.com

TUDOR

Tudor's Black Bay Chrono (\$4,725 on leather strap and \$5,050 on metal bracelet) is another value-driven crowd pleaser with a retro vibe. The sporty 41-mm stainless-steel chronograph features the brand's signature white snowflake hands. A domed, matte-black dial heightens legibility with recessed chronograph sub-counters

for contrast. But the big news is the Caliber MT5813, a column-wheel chronograph with vertical clutch, which is based off of Breitling's B01 chronograph with a 70-hour power reserve. Naturally, Tudor made its own modifications, such as developing the high-precision regulating organ with a silicon balance spring. And in the true spirit of partnership, Breitling's updated Super-ocean Heritage dive watch—another retro standout, which is marking its 60th anniversary this year—is outfitted with the new Breitling Caliber B20 movement based off the Tudor Caliber MT5612 with Breitling modifications. tudorwatch.com

**Spectacular grail watches surely
make our hearts beat faster, but
they are extremely rare outliers.**

ROLEX

Another no-brainer classic dive watch is Rolex's 50th anniversary tribute to its legendary Oyster Perpetual Sea-Dweller (\$11,350), which is expected to be among the year's top sellers. One leading U.S. retailer commented that his phone started ringing as soon as the watch was unveiled in Baselworld last March. Rather than recreate the original, Rolex updated it with a 3-mm increase in size to 43 mm and added the brand's cyclops lens over the date window at 3 O'CLOCK, a first for the flagship model. This technical dive watch is water resistant down to 4,000 feet and features a helium escape valve, an innovation that Rolex patented in 1967.



ZENITH



BULGARI



PANERAI

The tribute Sea-Dweller has been equipped with a new Caliber 3235 automatic movement with patented timekeeping innovations that ensure precision of $-2/+2$ seconds per day in keeping with the brand's stringent Superlative Chronometer certification. In a nod to the original from 1967, the words Sea-Dweller are printed in red on the black dial. rolex.com

ZENITH

Zenith's new Defy El Primero 21 (\$10,600 in skeletonized titanium as shown) traces back to the brand's legendary 1969 El Primero high-frequency 5Hz column-wheel chronograph that lives on today. This year's Defy 21 supercharges the El Primero with a second 50Hz regulating system that can track elapsing times to 1/100th of a second with a central chronograph hand that spins around the dial at a dizzying one revolution per second. The blue and dark-gray chronograph counters offer a nod to its ancestor, while the open-worked dial puts the intricate architecture of the cutting-edge movement in full view, making a thoroughly modern technical statement. zenith-watches.com

BULGARI

Bulgari continues its record-breaking run of supercool ultrathin watches with this year's time-only Octo Finissimo Automatic. The world's thinnest automatic watch, it measures only 5.15 mm thick with a 2.23-mm-thick movement appointed with a heavy platinum micro-rotor for winding efficiency and a 60-hour power reserve. The elegant, yet resolutely contemporary, design is housed in a lightweight, faceted titanium case that can be fitted with a leather strap (\$12,800), but we prefer the supple titanium bracelet (\$13,900) that feels like liquid metal on the wrist. bulgari.com

PANERAI

Perhaps more than any other new model, Panerai's Lab-ID Luminor 1950 Carbotech 3 Days—49mm (50,000 euro, or about \$51,300) best fuses the watches of yesteryear with the watches of tomorrow. Known for its oversize cushion-shaped watches that evoke its mid-20th-century history as a supplier to the Italian navy, Panerai preserves its essential forms. However, the materials used in the 49-mm Luminor 1950 case and its trademark cutaway sandwich dial are anything but traditional. The watch's case is made from lightweight Carbotech, which consists of thin layers of carbon fiber fused under high temperature and pressure with the organic polymer PEEK for added robustness. In addition to being lighter and stronger than ceramic or titanium, Carbotech is also hypoallergenic and resists corrosion. Striations in the material make each case unique. The dial is covered with dense, black, carbon nanotubes that absorb light like a black hole, so the bright blue Super LumiNova numbers and indexes pop.

The real innovation is in the movement. The manual-winding, semi-skeletonized caliber P.3001/C applies carbon advancements to achieve watchmaking's long-held goal of eliminating traditional lubricants. The main plate and bridges are made from a new low-friction Tantalum-based ceramic composite with a high percentage of carbon. The main escapement components are made of silicon, and the wheelwork is finished with a special DLC (diamond-like carbon) coating that is also used in the coating on the two spring barrels. The use of self-lubricating and dry-lubricating materials throughout makes added liquid lubricants unnecessary, which means Panerai can guarantee the new Lab-ID (limited to 50 pieces) for an unprecedented 50 years. panerai.com ♦

Laurie Kahle is a contributing editor for CIGAR AFICIONADO.



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DOMINICAN

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cigars

160 CIGAR REVIEW: 79 SMOKES

Our panel of editors assess the quality of 79 cigars in a blind-tasting that weighs construction, taste and overall performance.

182 PERFECTION FROM ANOTHER ERA

A pre-Castro Cuban tops the Connoisseur's Corner with a perfect 100 points. In the 1950s, it only cost 55 cents. Today? Priceless. Also, an astounding 99-point Cohiba rolled in a beautiful, yet retired, Corojo wrapper.

185 TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CHANGE

In the last two-and-a-half decades, cigar tastes have shifted, brand loyalty has waned and the sheer variety of smokes has multiplied exponentially. Assistant editor David Clough takes us through the evolution of premium cigars.

195 CUBA, THEN AND NOW

Things have changed in Cuba over the last 25 years, though some things have not. Senior contributing editor Gordon Mott recalls the hard times of Havana and the golden eras as well.

churchills

There are three parts to the Rocky Patel Vintage 2003 Cameroon Churchill—one savory, one spicy and one sweet. The Honduran cigar, which scored 93 points to lead this category, presents each note like a procession of waiters bringing one course after the next, all leading to the sweet finale. The hallmark of the blend is its Cameroon wrapper, a distinctive tobacco with a rich history that's becoming rarer in the market. It's an expensive crop to produce and not many farmers are growing it anymore. A quartet of cigars from three countries scored 91 points—Alec Bradley, Padrón, Undercrown and Villiger's rebled and reimagined Flor de Ynclan, which hit the market this summer.



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

ROCKY PATEL VINTAGE 2003 CAMEROON CHURCHILL

Brawny notes of meat and leather with a lively red-pepper spice are in welcome contrast to this cigar's candy bar sweetness, which calls to mind cocoa and nougat.
U.S.: \$10.10 U.K.: N/A

93



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS, INDONESIA
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

ALEC BRADLEY TEMPUS NATURAL CENTURIA

The draw of this tightly packed Churchill has a bit of resistance, but imparts an oaky, nutty smoke with earthy underpinnings and a nougat sweetness.
U.S.: \$8.55 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PADRÓN 1964 ANNIVERSARY SERIES DIPLOMATICO

Initial puffs of this box-pressed cigar are a bit thin with a woody, tea-like quality, but the cigar picks up some richness showing hints of cocoa, leather and almonds.
U.S.: \$14.10 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: BRAZIL, NICARAGUA
BINDER: U.S.A./CONNECTICUT
WRAPPER: MEXICO

UNDERCROWN CHURCHILL

Notes of oaky vanilla, leather and cumin are brought together by sweet spiciness and a coffee-like finish. The dark cigar exudes a notably sweet aroma as it burns.
U.S.: \$9.44 U.K.: N/A

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: INDONESIA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

VILLIGER LA FLOR DE YNCLAN CHURCHILL

A toasty, nutty cigar with sweet-and-sour notes of raisins and red wine. The finish is especially nutty. Medium-bodied and flavorful.
U.S.: \$12.00 U.K.: N/A

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 47 LENGTH: 6 7/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

DAVIDOFF WINSTON CHURCHILL CHURCHILL

A dark, oily Churchill whose notes of coffee, dried fruit and cinnamon follow each other to a wheaty, medium-bodied finish.
U.S.: \$19.50 U.K.: N/A

90

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

H. UPMANN BY AJ FERNANDEZ CHURCHILL

A superbly crafted Churchill with an even burn. It's a cedary smoke with hints of walnut shell and vanilla bean that leave the palate a bit chalky.
U.S.: \$7.75 U.K.: N/A

89**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

MONTECRISTO CLASSIC CHURCHILL

Yellowish and veiny, this cigar is surprisingly flavorful, showing a nutty, almond-like quality with hints of cinnamon and cedar. A medium-bodied smoke.
U.S.: \$13.34 U.K.: N/A

89**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ESPADA BY MONTECRISTO QUILLON

A simple, leathery, woody smoke with notes of roasted peanut and earth. The woodiness is persistent, continuing onto the finish along with a bit of sharpness.
U.S.: \$13.08 U.K.: N/A

88**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ARCHETYPE INITIATION CHURCHILL

Intermittent notes of mesquite, nuts and nougat go in and out, but a sharp finish hurt the score. A medium- to full-bodied smoke.
U.S.: \$12.89 U.K.: N/A

87**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: MEXICO
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

DANIEL MARSHALL WHITE LABEL CHURCHILL

Muted flavors eventually open up to show a nutty, floral smoke that stays in the mild to medium-bodied range throughout.
U.S.: \$8.95 U.K.: N/A

87**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

ROCKY PATEL VINTAGE 1999 CONNECTICUT CHURCHILL

As the light, greenish wrapper of this Churchill suggests, it's a mild smoke with some cream and lemon citrus notes. Faint baking spices are also detectable, but the finish is papery.
U.S.: \$10.10 U.K.: N/A

87**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 6 7/8"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. SHADE

ASHTON PRIME MINISTER

Covered in a coarse, Connecticut wrapper, this Churchill-sized cigar is mild and slightly nutty with muted notes of cedar, lemon zest and a hay-like finish.
U.S.: \$10.30 U.K.: N/A

86**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA PALINA CLASSIC CONNECTICUT CHURCHILL

While first puffs of this cigar are tangy with lemony notes, the smoke becomes tart with a papery finish.
U.S.: \$7.50 U.K.: N/A

85



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corona gordas

Flor de Las Antillas cigars are made in Nicaragua at the My Father Cigars factory, which is run by the Garcia family. The maduro version is only a year old and the Corona (which is fat enough to fit in our corona gorda category) scored 92 points. Most maduros in the premium cigar industry are made with broadleaf or Mexican wrappers, but this one is rolled with a Cuban-seed Ecuadoran wrapper leaf. Two cigars scored 91 points. Cuba's Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure Especial first appeared as an Edición Limitada, but is now part of the normal brand. La Alianza is produced in the Dominican Republic by Ernesto Perez-Carrillo and is named after his small but efficient factory.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 5/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

FLOR DE LAS ANTILLAS MADURO CORONA

Every puff of this dark, box-pressed cigar layers the palate with a rich combination of toast and chocolate balanced by hints of baking spice over a warm, woody base.
U.S.: \$7.60 U.K.: N/A

92



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: NOVEMBER 2016

HOYO DE MONTERREY EPICURE ESPECIAL

A toasty, floral smoke that develops a nutty richness and a sweet, candied-ginger finish. There is slight resistance to the draw.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £24.40

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA ALIANZA NATURAL SABROSOS

Made with a streaky wrapper and four-seam cap, this tangy smoke is strong and bold, yet maintains an elegant balance of hickory, semisweet chocolate and orange peel.
U.S.: \$6.70 U.K.: N/A

91



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, COSTA RICA, COLOMBIA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

GRAN HABANO LA CONQUISTA GRAN ROBUSTO

Firm to the touch and solidly packed with tobacco. The definitive core of earth and leather is balanced by sweeter touches of vanilla and maraschino cherries.
U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

LA BARBA RED 46 X 5 3/4

Crafted with an excellent cap and flat head, this oily cigar leaves impressions of spicy leather, chewy nougat and an underlying nuttiness before an earthy finish.
U.S.: \$9.10 U.K.: N/A

90



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

PUNCH GRAN PURO NICARAGUA 5 1/2 X 54

This dark, toothy cigar has an even draw and burn. It starts out earthy with heavy mineral notes but becomes sweet with hints of apple, almonds and cedar.
U.S.: \$6.79 U.K.: N/A

90

corona gordas



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

1502 RUBY TORO

A dark, box-pressed cigar with an uncut foot. First impressions are woody and strong with a cashew note and a bit of toffee sweetness. The finish has the tanginess of copper.
U.S.: \$9.50 U.K.: N/A

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ESPINOSA CREMA NO. 5

Blondish and light with a neat, three-seam cap. Its lush draw shows big notes of cedar and nuts interwoven with touches of spice.
U.S.: \$9.35 U.K.: N/A

89



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: MEXICO

REGIUS EXCLUSIVO U.S.A. OSCURO ESPECIAL TORO EXTRA

Strikingly dark with a near-black wrapper evocative of the dark chocolate notes it delivers to the palate. A faint nuttiness emerges as well before the lean, woody finish.
U.S.: \$13.60 U.K.: N/A

89



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

KRISTOFF CONNECTICUT ROBUSTO

A greenish-yellow cigar that draws and burns evenly. It's a creamy, woody smoke spiced up with notes of cumin and a slate-like finish.
U.S.: \$9.20 U.K.: N/A

88



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 46 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

CORNELIUS & ANTHONY MERIDIAN CORONA GORDA

Fresh and floral with woody notes of hickory, mesquite and pine that frame an earthy core, though the finish falls a bit flat and chalky.
U.S.: \$8.75 U.K.: N/A

87



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 58 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

LA AURORA 1962 COROJO GRAN TORO

An earthy, woody smoke with a lush draw and even burn. Some white pepper notes emerge before a slightly syrupy-tasting finish.
U.S.: \$6.25 U.K.: N/A

87



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, HONDURAS,
BRAZIL
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

BELLAS ARTES TORO

The rounded curves of this toro give it the appearance of a candy bar. It's a mostly woody smoke with hints of leather and yeast, but a musty earthiness lingers on the palate.
U.S.: \$9.50 U.K.: N/A

86



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: HONDURAS, NICARAGUA,
DOM. REP.
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

COHIBA BLUE ROBUSTO

There's a slightly gritty appearance to this cigar, which burns and draws evenly. It's a woody smoke with some salt-and-pepper notes and a charry finish.
U.S.: \$9.99 U.K.: N/A

86

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GIGA 5



XJ9 Professional



E8



A9

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This was a superb tasting—nine of the figurados we tasted here scored 90 points or higher, outstanding on our 100-point scale. At the top was a trio of especially fine smokes, including the Bolivar Belicoso Fino, which is synonymous in the Cuban cigar world with strength. While the wrapper is lighter than those normally found on Bolivars, the cigar was still medium- to full-bodied. The Oliva Serie V brand turned 10 years old this year and still has all the strength it had a decade ago. This is a credit to Oliva and to J. Cortes, the European company that acquired Oliva a year and a half ago. J. Cortes vowed to uphold quality, and so far, the company has obliged. The Romeo by Romeo y Julieta Aging Room, a collaboration between Rafael Nodal and Altadis U.S.A., is a reimagined Romeo.



CUBA

BOLIVAR BELICOSO FINO

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MARCH 2017

A fine-looking belicoso that produces a silky, creamy smoke layered with notes of nuts, wood and black pepper. A medium- to full-bodied cigar.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £21.60

92



NICARAGUA

OLIVA SERIE V TORPEDO

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

A large, well-made torpedo whose even draw delivers big notes of chocolate and herbs with a long finish that hints of cinnamon. Bold and well balanced.
U.S.: \$10.03 U.K.: N/A

92



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

ROMEO BY ROMEO Y JULIETA AGING ROOM SMALL BATCH F25 CANTAR

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

Oils appear to be seeping through the wrapper of this good-looking torpedo. Its inherent tanginess is uplifted by a complex harmony of leather, cocoa powder and sweet peanut notes.
U.S.: \$12.50 U.K.: N/A

92



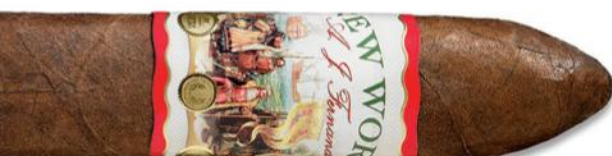
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

LA FLOR DOMINICANA AIR BENDER CHISEL

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

Fashioned with a wedge-shaped head, this unorthodox pirámide begins herbal and woody before intensifying to richer, stronger notes of licorice and chocolate that lead to a spicy, cedary finish.
U.S.: \$9.70 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

NEW WORLD ALMIRANTE

RING GAUGE: 55 LENGTH: 5 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

The earthy, rustic notes of this dark, box-pressed belicoso become more refined and precise, showing cacao and coffee bean qualities before a finish of nuts and fruit.
U.S.: \$6.67 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: MEXICO

NORTEÑO BELICOSO FINO

A flatly pressed, half belicoso whose cedary, leathery notes pick up a touch of chocolate before a big anise and licorice finish.
U.S.: \$11.25 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 3/4"
FILLER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF, MEXICO, NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

SURROGATES 7TH SAM

Skillfully crafted with a dark wrapper, this double-tapered salomon leaves earthy, nutty and floral impressions on the palate. The finish hints of malted chocolate.
U.S.: \$11.00 U.K.: N/A

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 49 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: CAMEROON

ARTURO FUENTE HEMINGWAY SHORT STORY

Despite its small size, the tapers of this mini perfecto are crafted to beautiful scale and symmetry. It burns evenly too, showing a sweet and nutty walnut character with underlying earthiness.
U.S.: \$5.95 U.K.: N/A

90



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 6 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: APRIL 2016

MONTECRISTO NO. 2

An attractive torpedo that burns evenly. Each puff is bold with nutty notes of cashew, cedar and maple syrup. Somewhat of a low score for this particular cigar.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £24.30

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: MEXICO, NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

TATUAJE NÉGOCIANT MONOPOLE NO. 2

This cigar is toasty and nutty despite its pale, yellowish hue and veiny wrapper. Some spice notes also come through as well as an orange peel finish.
U.S.: \$10.00 U.K.: N/A

88



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 58 LENGTH: 7"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

CASA MAGNA COLORADO EXTRAORDINARIO

Under the overwhelming notes of charred wood and black tea, hints of licorice emerge. A strong smoke that could use more balance.
U.S.: \$12.21 U.K.: N/A

87



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 6 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

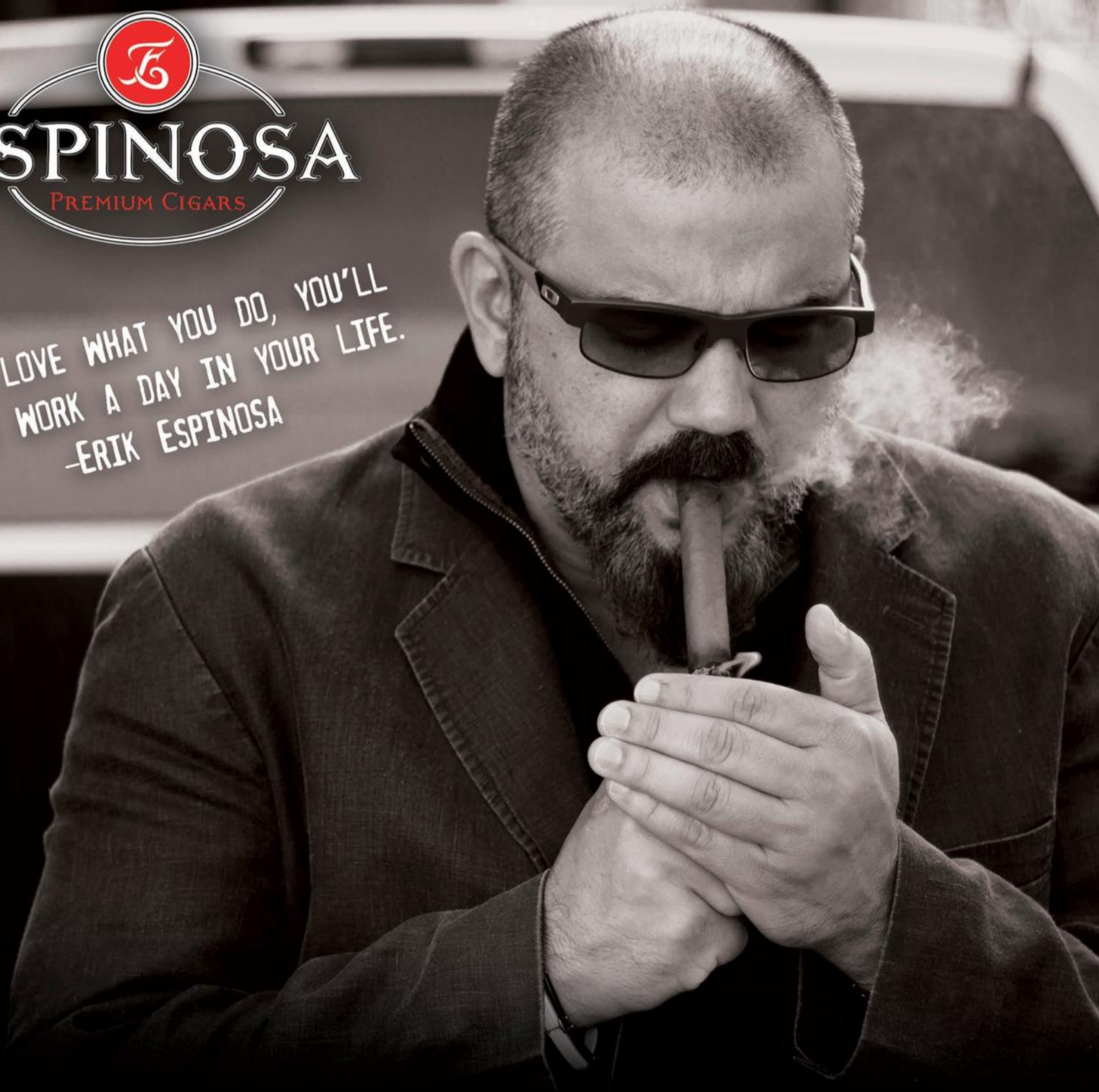
PERDOMO HABANO BOURBON BARREL-AGED MADURO TORPEDO

A dark torpedo with the oily qualities of black licorice and tar. Any trace of sweetness becomes earthy with a heavy mineral finish.
U.S.: \$8.00 U.K.: N/A

86



IF YOU LOVE WHAT YOU DO, YOU'LL
NEVER WORK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE.
-ERIK ESPINOSA



H. UPMANN AJ FERNANDEZ

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Who else but AJ Fernandez could reimagine a 175-year legacy of uncommon quality to create something truly original? Let us introduce you to the H. Upmann AJ Fernandez, an authentic, distinct Nicaraguan cigar for the next generation of uncompromising adult smokers.

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Ernesto Perez-Carrillo, “The Godfather of large-ring-gauge cigars,” is an outspoken defender of thick smokes like the ones found here in our Grandes category. Traditionalists might disparage the hefty parameters, but Perez-Carrillo believes that a large format allows for more blend experimentation. His E.P. Carrillo Dusk Solidos scored 92 points and is compelling evidence that he’s mastered the art of blending heavy ring gauges. Two Nicaraguan cigars scored 90 points. Cain Habano is owned by Oliva Cigar Co. and first marketed through its now dormant Studio Tobac, which was Oliva’s experimental arm. Rocky Patel Special Edition cigars showcase a well-aged Ecuadoran wrapper.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF

E.P. CARRILLO DUSK SOLIDOS

A dark, fat cigar with a lush draw. It starts quite peppery before showing notes of salted nuts, graham cracker and sweet raisins. A balanced and complex smoke.
U.S.: \$9.10 U.K.: N/A

92



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

CAIN HABANO 660

Solidly packed with tobacco, this fat cigar smokes evenly, showing a strong, cedary core accompanied by notes of leather white pepper and a floral finish.
U.S.: \$8.20 U.K.: N/A

90



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ROCKY PATEL SPECIAL EDITION SIXTY

The wrapper of this big, box-pressed cigar is seemingly drenched in oil. Sweet notes of caramel, coffee bean and chocolate carry traces of acidity, especially on the finish.
U.S.: \$12.10 U.K.: N/A

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ARTURO FUENTE ROSADO SUNGROWN MAGNUM R VITOLA “SUPER SIXTY”

A colorado cigar with a reddish wrapper and easy draw. First puffs are sweet and herbal but progress to heavier, earthy notes, roasted coffee bean and a mineral finish.
U.S.: \$11.75 U.K.: N/A

89



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: COLOMBIA, BRAZIL
BINDER: CAMEROON
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

CAO COLOMBIA BOGOTA

Floral notes are particularly dominant, especially on the first draw, but this tan cigar also delivers an oaky, vanilla sweetness before a light, herbal finish.
U.S.: \$8.19 U.K.: N/A

89



NICARAGUA
RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

CASA FERNANDEZ AGANORSA LEAF TABSA SUNYATA NO. 4

Thick and hefty with an impressively even burn. Its initial rich earthiness becomes lighter and herbal with botanical notes of licorice, juniper and gin. The finish leaves a flinty aftertaste.
U.S.: \$7.60 U.K.: N/A

89

**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
 FILLER: NICARAGUA
 BINDER: NICARAGUA
 WRAPPER: ECUADOR

PADILLA CONNECTICUT DOUBLE TORO

This yellowish cigar exudes a sweet cinnamon aroma that recurs on the palate along with woody hickory notes. It's a mild, simple smoke.
U.S.: \$8.00 U.K.: N/A

89

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
 FILLER: NICARAGUA
 BINDER: NICARAGUA
 WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PADRÓN 7000 MADURO

The draw is a bit thin for such a large, thick cigar, but imparts a smoke redolent of roasted peanut and walnut shell before a dry, dusty earth finish.
U.S.: \$8.40 U.K.: N/A

89

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 5 3/4"
 FILLER: NICARAGUA
 BINDER: NICARAGUA
 WRAPPER: ECUADOR

SAN CRISTOBAL REVELATION ODYSSEY

A big medium-bodied log of a cigar with an open even draw that delivers a primarily herbal smoke to the palate. Some toasty notes and traces of spice combine for a light, cereal finish.
U.S.: \$9.25 U.K.: N/A

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
 FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA
 BINDER: DOM. REP.
 WRAPPER: DOM. REP.

A. FLORES GRAN RESERVA 1975 DOUBLE MAGNUM

A fat cigar with a reddish-brown wrapper and a substantial draw that delivers notes of earth, minerals and fruit. Sweet, nutty notes also emerge before an ashy finish.
U.S.: \$15.80 U.K.: N/A

88

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
 FILLER: NICARAGUA
 BINDER: NICARAGUA
 WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

DAVIDOFF NICARAGUA 60X6

A predominantly woody smoke with a strong oaky quality. Touches of licorice and baking spice come through as well leaving an earthy finish.
U.S.: \$19.20 U.K.: N/A

87

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
 FILLER: NICARAGUA
 BINDER: NICARAGUA
 WRAPPER: ECUADOR

MY FATHER CONNECTICUT TORO GORDO

First puffs of this light, golden-brown cigar are surprisingly spicy, segueing into a graham-cracker sweetness and earthy finish. More powerful than it looks.
U.S.: \$9.50 U.K.: N/A

87

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6"
 FILLER: NICARAGUA
 BINDER: NICARAGUA
 WRAPPER: HONDURAS

ALEC BRADLEY AMERICAN CLASSIC BLEND GORDO

Greenish in appearance with a dull wrapper, this cigar produces a flaky ash as it burns. It's a dry smoke with faint nuttiness and a bit of graham cracker that leaves an aftertaste of straw and hay.
U.S.: \$6.75 U.K.: N/A

86

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 60 LENGTH: 6 1/4"
 FILLER: DOM. REP.
 BINDER: DOM. REP.
 WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA GALERA 1936 BOX PRESSED GORDO

Thick and box-pressed, the cocoa-tinted cigar resembles a bar of chocolate. Its crooked burn evens out and the lush draw leaves toasty, woody impressions with hints of caramel and fruit, but the finish tastes green and slightly soapy.
U.S.: \$9.20 U.K.: N/A

86

Originally opened
on Derby Day in 1935,
the Stitzel-Weller Distillery
is one of the true
cathedrals of bourbon.



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FROM RARITY COMES QUALITY

Blade and Bow is a Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey born of some of the oldest
and rarest remaining stocks to be distilled here at the legendary Stitzel-Weller Distillery.

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Three cigars are shown diagonally across the frame. The leftmost cigar is dark brown with a gold 'BRICK HOUSE' label and a 'MADURO' band. The middle cigar is light brown with a gold 'BRICK HOUSE' label. The rightmost cigar is dark brown with a gold 'BRICK HOUSE' label and a 'CONNECTICUT' band featuring a red, white, and blue striped design with stars. The background is a textured, reddish-brown surface.

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Introducing the NEW
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Mild on the outside but a little wild on the inside.

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petit coronas

In lieu of cigars blowing up to thick, almost cartoonish proportions, petit coronas still find an audience, and three cigars in this tasting scored 91 points, all delivering bold performances that belie their diminutive appearance. Fans of smaller smokes would no doubt appreciate the Fonseca Nicaragua Petit Corona. It's made in Nicaragua by the Plasencias and contains a variety of Nicaraguan tobaccos from Estelí, Ometepe and Jalapa. There's a good chance that fans of the Fonseca Nicaragua would also appreciate the Nat Sherman Panamericana Secreto. It's made by the same family in the same factory. Although the blend differs, one could say there is a rich house style connecting the two. The Cuban Partagás Short continues to uphold its reputation as a little cigar with plenty of power.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

FONSECA NICARAGUA PETIT CORONA

A squarely pressed petit corona full of rich, earthy tobacco fortified by a hearty combination of leather, cedar and sassafras notes that remain in balance. A sweet touch of candied fruit also comes through.
U.S.: \$4.95 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

NAT SHERMAN PANAMERICANA SECRETO

Dark and gleaming with oils, this little cigar delivers big meaty notes of leather and black pepper with a sweet hint of cocoa. Rich and bold for such a small smoke.
U.S.: \$8.50 U.K.: N/A

91



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 4 3/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MAY 2017

PARTAGÁS SHORT

The dense smoke of this small cigar imparts a strong, complex core of woody notes ranging from oak rum barrels to hickory and cedar while an earthy, coffee bean quality accentuates each puff.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £12.20

91



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: JULY 2015

COHIBA SIGLO I (TUBO)

There's an attractive, oily gleam to the wrapper of this petit corona. Although it starts out light, the smoke becomes considerably stronger midway, showing a heady, earthy character with leather and graham cracker notes.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £17.80

90



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 5 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MARCH 2015

MONTECRISTO NO. 4

Though rustic in appearance, this corona has a dead-even burn and lush draw. It's floral and salty with earthy elements and sweeter touches of cocoa powder.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £13.20

90



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

ILLUSIONE FUME D'AMOUR LAGUNAS

The peppery, leathery qualities of this petit corona give way to notes of shaved coconut, crushed walnuts and an ashy finish.
U.S.: \$7.10 U.K.: N/A

89



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 43 LENGTH: 5 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: AUGUST 2016

PUNCH CORONATION (TUBO)

Veiny and wrinkled in appearance, this cigar has an open, even draw that imparts a nutty smoke with a graham cracker sweetness and floral undertone, all of which dissipate for a short finish.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £12.16

89



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 3 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP., NICARAGUA, PERU
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

LA AURORA 1495 15 MINUTE BREAK

Quite strong and peppery, this is a full-bodied cigar from first puff to last, but it also takes on earthy, woody notes and a finish of charred oak.
U.S.: \$4.25 U.K.: N/A

88



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 41 LENGTH: 4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP., U.S.A./PENN. BROADLEAF
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

VIVA REPUBLICA ADVANCED WARFARE PETIT CORONA

A veiny petit corona with a simple, fresh tobacco character that carries hints of caramel, black pepper and wood.
U.S.: \$5.00 U.K.: N/A

88



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 41 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

DAVIDOFF MILLENNIUM BLEND SERIES PETIT CORONA

A quaint and well-rolled petit corona with a leather and spice quality that's offset by notes of wax and mushrooms.
U.S.: \$13.60 U.K.: N/A

87



HONDURAS

RING GAUGE: 40 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP., HONDURAS, NICARAGUA
BINDER: U.S.A./CONN. BROADLEAF
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

PUNCH LONDON CLUB MADURO

This skinny dark smoke starts out showing notes of leather, black cherry and licorice but leaves a very strong, charry aftertaste.
U.S.: \$3.09 U.K.: N/A

86



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 42 LENGTH: 4 3/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

JOYA DE NICARAGUA ANTAÑO 1970 MACHITO

Vague notes of earth and chocolate struggle to get through this petit corona's overwhelming mustiness and soapy qualities. The finish is bitter.
U.S.: \$5.32 U.K.: N/A

83



LA FLOR DE YNCLAN

TOBACCO



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a good and a great cigar...

I hope you feel the same."

Heinrich Villiger

-Heinrich Villiger



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robustos

The Padrón Serie 1926 No. 9 scored 91 points and is one of CIGAR AFICIONADO's perennial overachievers. It's often on the top of the tasting category and it's even been named Cigar of the Year. That was back in 2007. Ten years later, it's still a fantastic smoke which speaks volumes about the Padrón family and their ability to maintain high standards of quality and consistency. The Padróns have a long history behind them, and in the world of premium cigars, the name is royalty. While cigars from their Serie 1926 were never inexpensive, fans have been more than happy to part with their money. What they get in exchange is a smoking experience that is full-bodied and hearty, but focused and precise. The cigar's color and box-pressing calls to mind chocolate. If the appearance is all part of some subliminal scheme that uses the power of suggestion, then consider us highly suggestible. The Serino Royale Maduro XX brand might not be as familiar. It scored 91 points and comes from the fairly new Serino Cigar Co., which has its cigars made at La Corona in Nicaragua, in the space formerly occupied by Nicaraguan American Tobacco S.A.



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 5 1/4"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

PADRÓN SERIE 1926 NO. 9

Dark, box-pressed and imposing, this chunky robusto is as bold as it looks showing big, unmistakable notes of leather and licorice punctuated by a touch of pepper and a sweet, earthy finish.
U.S.: \$19.70 U.K.: N/A

91



NICARAGUA

RING GAUGE: 48 LENGTH: 5 1/8"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

SERINO ROYALE MADURO XX ROBUSTO

Elements of sweet earth and dense, sticky almond paste are beautifully complemented by a spiciness that precedes this dark cigar's toasty, nutty finish.
U.S.: \$9.75 U.K.: N/A

91



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: MEXICO

HAMMER + SICKLE TRADEMARK SERIES MADURO ROBUSTO

Gleaming with oil, this cigar forms a flaky ash as it burns. Oak, leather and fruit intonations build to a finish of coffee and licorice.
U.S.: \$8.99 U.K.: N/A

90



CUBA

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4 7/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: FEBRUARY 2013

MONTECRISTO OPEN MASTER (TUBO)

Every puff of this robusto has all the vanilla oakiness of a bourbon barrel. Sweet touches of nougat and floral undertones lead to an earthy, barnyard finish.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £23.50

90



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ARTURO FUENTE CHATEAU FUENTE SUN GROWN

The herbal start of this robusto becomes heavier and more intense, leaving big nutty notes on the palate along with the dry, chocolate quality of cocoa powder.
U.S.: \$5.35 U.K.: N/A

89

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 4 1/2"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: FEBRUARY 2017

COHIBA MADURO 5 MÁGICOS

Bold at first, this dark robusto burns and draws well, showing a heavy smoke dense with coffee bean and leather, though the finish is quite floral and perfumey.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £34.70

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 5 1/4"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: U.S.A./CONN. HABANO

DIAMOND CROWN BLACK DIAMOND MARQUISE

A predominantly woody, charry smoke with some sweeter touches of dried strawberries and malted chocolate. The cigar is dark and oily.
U.S.: \$19.00 U.K.: N/A

89

**HONDURAS**

RING GAUGE: 50 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: HONDURAS
BINDER: HONDURAS
WRAPPER: HONDURAS

EIROA 50X5

There's a salt-and-pepper quality to this dark cigar. Some nutty, black pepper notes come through as well, all underscored by a consistent earthiness.
U.S.: \$11.12 U.K.: N/A

89

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 4 3/4"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: DECEMBER 2016

H. UPMANN MAGNUM 54 (TUBO)

An unevenly applied three-seam cap tops this robusto, whose initial floral notes and woodiness become stronger leaving impressions of German chocolate and faint nuts on the palate.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £26.50

89

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA, DOM. REP.
BINDER: ECUADOR
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

UNDERCROWN SHADE ROBUSTO

Some nutmeg and other notes of baking spices accent this predominantly woody, brady cigar. The finish is mild and grassy.
U.S.: \$8.08 U.K.: N/A

89

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

RING GAUGE: 54 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: DOM. REP.
BINDER: DOM. REP.
WRAPPER: ECUADOR

ASHTON VIRGIN SUN GROWN PEGASUS

Earthy, fruity notes are up-front while hints of wood and licorice tend to linger in the background, however the finish becomes chalky and dry. This dark, oily robusto is nearly black in color.
U.S.: \$11.60 U.K.: N/A

88

**CUBA**

RING GAUGE: 52 LENGTH: 5 1/8"
FILLER: CUBA
BINDER: CUBA
WRAPPER: CUBA
BOX DATE: MARCH 2017

PARTAGÁS MADURO NO. 1

A dark cigar with the spicy, meaty qualities of smoked sausages. The dry, tannic finish grips the palate leaving a touch of leather as well.
U.S.: N/A U.K.: £22.80

88

**NICARAGUA**

RING GAUGE: 56 LENGTH: 5"
FILLER: NICARAGUA
BINDER: NICARAGUA
WRAPPER: NICARAGUA

OLIVEROS GRAN RETORNO RAGTIME

Under this cigar's earthy, woody smoke is an unmistakable minty quality that persists throughout from draw to finish. Some inconsistency was noted on the draw.
U.S.: \$7.95 U.K.: N/A

86

Cigars are listed first by country and then by score. Please refer to the main tasting pages for notes and prices.

CIGAR AFICIONADO'S 100-POINT SCALE

Classic
95–100
Outstanding
90–94
Very good to excellent
80–89
Average to good
commercial quality
70–79
Don't waste your money
60–69
Not available
n/a
*Note: all prices are
manufacturers' suggested
retail, before taxes.*

CUBA

- 92 Bolivar Belicoso Fino
- 91 Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure Especial
- 91 Partagás Short
- 90 Cohiba Siglo I (Tubo)
- 90 Montecristo No. 2
- 90 Montecristo No. 4
- 90 Montecristo Open Master (Tubo)
- 89 Cohiba Maduro 5 Mágicos
- 89 H. Upmann Magnum 54 (Tubo)
- 89 Punch Coronation (Tubo)
- 88 Partagás Maduro No. 1
- DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**
- 92 E.P. Carrillo Dusk Solidos
- 92 Romeo by Romeo y Julieta Aging Room Small Batch F25 Cantaor
- 91 La Alianza Natural Sabrosos
- 91 La Flor Dominicana Air Bender Chisel
- 91 Villiger La Flor de Yncian Churchill
- 90 Arturo Fuente Hemingway Short Story
- 90 Davidoff Winston Churchill Churchill
- 90 Hammer + Sickle Trademark Series Maduro Robusto
- 90 La Barba Red 46 x 5 3/4
- 89 Arturo Fuente Chateau Fuente Sun Grown
- 89 Arturo Fuente Rosado Sungrown Magnum R Vitola "Super Sixty"
- 89 Diamond Crown Black Diamond Marquise
- 89 Montecristo Classic Churchill
- 88 A. Flores Gran Reserva 1975 Double Magnum
- 88 Ashton Virgin Sun Grown Pegasus
- 88 La Aurora 1495 15 Minute Break
- 88 Kristoff Connecticut Robusto
- 88 Viva Republica Advanced Warfare Petit Corona
- 87 Daniel Marshall White Label Churchill
- 87 Davidoff Millennium Blend Series Petit Corona
- 87 Davidoff Nicaragua 60x6
- 87 La Aurora 1962 Corojo Gran Toro
- 86 Ashton Prime Minister
- 86 Cohiba Blue Robusto
- 86 La Galera 1936 Box Pressed Gordo
- 85 La Palina Classic Connecticut Churchill

HONDURAS

- 93 Rocky Patel Vintage 2003 Cameroon Churchill
- 91 Alec Bradley Tempus Natural Centuria

- 90 Gran Habano La Conquista Gran Robusto
- 90 Punch Gran Puro Nicaragua 5 1/2 x 54
- 89 Eiroa 50x5
- 89 Padilla Connecticut Double Toro
- 87 Rocky Patel Vintage 1999 Connecticut Churchill
- 86 Punch London Club Maduro

NICARAGUA

- 92 Flor de Las Antillas Maduro Corona
- 92 Oliva Serie V Torpedo
- 91 Fonseca Nicaragua Petit Corona
- 91 Nat Sherman Panamericana Secreto
- 91 New World Almirante
- 91 Norteño Belicoso Fino
- 91 Padrón 1964 Anniversary Series Diplomatico
- 91 Padrón Serie 1926 No. 9
- 91 Serino Royale Maduro XX Robusto
- 91 Surrogates 7th Sam
- 91 Undercrown Churchill
- 90 Cain Habano 660
- 90 Rocky Patel Special Edition Sixty
- 89 1502 Ruby Toro
- 89 CAO Colombia Bogota
- 89 Casa Fernandez Aganorsa Leaf TABSA Sunyata No. 4
- 89 Espinosa Crema No. 5
- 89 H. Upmann by AJ Fernandez Churchill
- 89 Illusione Fume d'Amour Lagunas
- 89 Padrón 7000 Maduro
- 89 Regius Exclusivo U.S.A. Oscuro Especial Toro Extra
- 89 San Cristobal Revelation Odyssey
- 89 Undercrown Shade Robusto
- 88 Espada by Montecristo Quillon
- 88 Tatuaje Négociant Monopole No. 2
- 87 Archetype Initiation Churchill
- 87 Casa Magna Colorado Extraordinario
- 87 Cornelius & Anthony Meridian Corona Gorda
- 87 My Father Connecticut Toro Gordo
- 86 Alec Bradley American Classic Blend Gordo
- 86 Bellas Artes Toro
- 86 Oliveros Gran Retorno Ragtime
- 86 Perdomo Habano Bourbon Barrel-Aged Maduro Torpedo
- 83 Joya de Nicaragua Antaño 1970 Machito



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connoisseur's corner

There was a time before Fidel Castro's Revolution when Cuban brands were privately owned, giving each owner the freedom to produce bespoke cigars for certain institutions around the world as he saw fit. The H. Upmann Tivoli was one such custom cigar. Tivolis were imported by Saks Fifth Avenue Importation and sold at the legendary Saks Humidor in New York City. In 1957, these petit coronas retailed for \$13.75 per box—or 55 cents each. Sixty years later, the H. Upmann Tivoli is not only still a great smoke, it's a perfect one, scoring 100 points, and truly a credit to the way things were crafted in the old days. Editor and Publisher Marvin R. Shanken smoked one of the cigars with NBA legend Michael Jordan during their interview, which begins on page 62.



H. UPMANN TIVOLI (1957)

A small, pre-Castro Cuban that's mellow, nostalgic and toasty. The cigar is on the light side, but remains full of flavor. The draw is perfect, and the smoke has a pleasant nutmeg character. A most memorable cigar. —*Marvin R. Shanken*

100



COHIBA ROBUSTO (1992)

It takes only a few licks of flame to the foot of this old and glorious Cohiba Robusto for the cigar to come to life, blasting the palate with notes of dark chocolate and earth right from the first puff. The draw is nearly effortless, the burn just a touch uneven, burning with a dark gray ash. It has an earthy core, with lots of wood, some floral notes and a long finish. A knuckle burner. —*David Savona*

99



CASA MAGNA COLORADO ROBUSTO (2009)

Vibrant from the first puff, this plump and oily Nicaraguan smoke comes with pedigree—it was named Cigar of the Year in 2008. Back then it scored 93 points, with notes of raisins and coffee. The raisin note remains, along with a quite powerful leather character and hints of crushed coffee beans. The cigar is aging well, and the considerable power that the smoke has retained shows that it's likely to age for many more years to come. —*David Savona*

95



DAVIDOFF CHÂTEAU MARGAUX (CIRCA 1980s)

Off to a slightly rough start, dusty notes of bitter woods soon become warm and intense with ground clove, cinnamon and nutmeg all brought together by a refined sweetness profoundly redolent of Marsala wine. The smoke of this petit corona is dense and creamy, the burn couldn't be more perfect. —*Gregory Mottola*

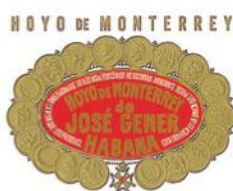
95



PARTAGÁS SHORT (1995)

A once fairly powerful cigar that has mellowed into a delicate smoke. At first light, opening puffs are dry and woody, but the smoke has a lush density to it and the flavors become more vibrant with floral qualities and a faint gingersnap sweetness that lingers in the background as a subtle reminder of its former spice. —*Gregory Mottola*

93



HOYO DE MONTERREY CULEBRA (CIRCA 1950s)

These twisted, skinny cigars have slightly pointy tips. Despite the twists and turns, they draw and burn with perfection. Dry and somewhat flinty at first, they begin to take on a nutty flavor farther in, with a very light touch of honey on the finish, which is rather short. The cigar is mild, and tastes past its prime. A curiosity that's not too complex, but still fun to smoke. —*David Savona*

92



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25 Years of Change

The American appetite for premium cigars has changed. Over the last 25 years, consumers in the United States have grown to prefer increasingly richer, fuller-bodied cigars. Lightly hued shade wrappers cultivated in the loamy soils of the Connecticut River Valley, once the most popular leaf on the planet, have fallen out of favor and the

American aesthetic that “bigger is better” has influenced the acceptable length and width of today’s premium smokes. At the same time, cigar prices have gone up, brand loyalty has gone down, and customers today are constantly on the hunt for new cigars to try, with an eye for different sizes, shapes and blends.

But a quarter of a century ago, U.S. cigar smokers had different tastes. There were fewer premium cigars

The evolution of the premium cigar over the past quarter century

BY DAVID CLOUGH

Consumer tastes have evolved toward fatter, darker, stronger smokes over the years.





Top: Workers inside a curing barn string together Nicaraguan tobacco.
Bottom: A barn full of cured Connecticut shade wrapper.

to choose from in 1992, and retail customers weren't looking for surprises. Men walked into their local tobacconists and knew exactly what they wanted. They reached for brands they believed in—mostly Dominican and Honduran-made smokes in classic sizes—and sought out their preferred cigars exclusively. They exhibited a degree of brand loyalty uncommon in today's option-driven marketplace.

"Consumers had a lot more loyalty, not only store loyalty but brand loyalty," recalls Chuck Levi, owner of Chicago's Iwan Ries & Co., the second-oldest cigar shop in America. "They smoked cigars they were familiar with. We didn't have new brands coming out every day like we do today. A guy smoked a Macanudo or a Montecristo and that was it."

Then, in the fall of 1992, curious readers turned the first glossy pages of a men's lifestyle magazine called CIGAR AFICIONADO. It featured a blind tasting of cigars, created to help consumers navigate the cigar market and make purchasing decisions. The

first tasting, like the many tastings that followed in 25 years, is a mirror into the past: a reflection of the current trends and popular smokes of the time.

That first blind tasting had only 23 cigars, much smaller than the taste tests we publish today, which typically have 75 to 80 cigars per issue. That inaugural tasting was indicative of the smaller market of the day—for the decade before 1992, premium cigar imports were stagnant, with around 105 million to 107 million handmade cigars imported annually. Nine of the cigars we rated were from the Dominican Republic, six were from Cuba, four from Honduras, two from the United States and one cigar each from Nicaragua and Mexico. Of the 17 non-Cuban cigars, nine of them—53 percent—wore Connecticut-shade wrappers.

"Connecticut shade was popular back then," says Curt Diebel, the owner of Diebel's Sportsmens Gallery in Kansas City, Missouri. Diebel started working at his family's tobacco and gift shop in 1975, after graduating college, and remembers that Connecticut shade once had a much stronger market presence that endured for many years. "It continued to be popular throughout the '90s," he says.

Connecticut shade tobacco leaf, grown under mesh tents in the state of Connecticut, has long been celebrated for its golden-yellow color and easygoing smoking characteristics. Throughout the '90s it enjoyed a special degree of charisma, as the cigar boom of the era brought in a large influx of new cigar smokers who wanted to ease their way into the cigar lifestyle by smoking something on the milder side.

"A lot of people, when they start smoking cigars, start with Connecticut shade," Diebel says. "They feel like they don't want to be overpowered."

Connecticut shade wrapper maintained its popularity in the first few years after the debut of CIGAR AFICIONADO, which coincided with the 1990s cigar boom that saw premium cigar imports soar from around 100 million cigars a year to more than 400 million by 1997. In 1996, just around the height of the cigar boom, 245 of

OLD FASHIONED EVEN IN 1891



The image features two bottles of Craigellachie Single Malt Scotch Whisky. The bottle on the left is labeled 'Aged 13 Years' and the one on the right is 'Aged 31 Years'. Both bottles have detailed labels with the distillery's history and location. The background is a stylized, woodcut-style illustration of a distillery building with a large still and a sign that reads 'WORLD WHISKIES AWARDS WORLD'S BEST SINGLE MALT'. A small crest with 'CRAIGELLACHIE 1891 SPEYSIDE 1891' is also visible.

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Cigar consumers eagerly sampling the wide array of cigars at a CIGAR AFICIONADO Big Smoke in 2000.

the 770 cigars we rated were rolled with Connecticut shade wrappers. That's 31.8 percent—nearly a third of all the cigars tasted for the year. If the tastings are a snapshot of the market, then Connecticut shade was everywhere.

But as smokers of the '90s grew into their passion, demand for Connecticut shade took a dip. "Once we had initiated smokers—the post-boom smokers around the millennium—you still had significant demand, but consumers were seeking out fuller-bodied cigars," says Diebel. In 1997, as the boom was starting to wane, fewer cigars with Connecticut shade wrappers were appearing in our pages. That year, only 21.4 percent of the cigars we rated were rolled with Connecticut shade wrapper. By 1998, the number had dropped to 16.7 percent. The results were clear: cigarmakers were moving to other wrappers.

"Starting in probably 1998 to around 2000, you see a stronger leaning towards fuller-bodied cigars," says David Berkebille of Georgetown Tobacco in Washington, D.C. Berkebille started his business in 1964, and has seen cigar trends come and go over the years.

Connecticut tobacco farmer Brandon Settje understands this reality. "Demand for shade tobacco is low," Settje said in August last year. He stood at the edge of a tobacco field in Somers, Connecticut, watching a pickup truck make its way down a long dirt road across the field. The wheels of the truck sent tumbling spirals of dust into the air, which hung lazily for a moment before settling back down to

the dry earth. Settje pointed out across the tobacco plants. "We grow what there's demand for. This year, it's all broadleaf."

Settje was referring to Connecticut broadleaf, a short and bushy tobacco varietal grown in the open sunlight of the Connecticut River Valley. Its wide leaves turn very dark after curing, and are often used for maduro wrappers—which typically offer a range of hearty, rugged flavors. In 2017, Settje is only growing broadleaf again. He says his farming company, B.A.S.S. Tobacco LLC, has no plans to grow shade tobacco anytime soon. "Broadleaf is big right now. For the next three years, I'm only growing broadleaf. The shade market has shifted over to Ecuador," Settje explains.

The South American country of Ecuador has farms where tobacco thrives, and when Connecticut seed is planted there it grows in a fashion quite similar to that in Connecticut, although with cheaper labor and no need for netting, as the cloud cover is persistent during the growing season. Leaf from Ecuador is one reason for Connecticut shade's decline.

A second reason is the growing demand for fuller-flavored cigars. Increasingly flavorful blends from the cigarmaking world, especially Nicaragua, have taken away marketshare once dominated by milder cigar blends. Nicaraguan cigars are a perfect example. The launch of Padrón's 1964 Anniversary Series in 1994 catapulted the company to new heights, and did much to raise awareness of Nicaragua's ability to create rich, fuller-bodied cigar blends.

(Padrón has won Cigar of the Year an unprecedented three times.) The Anniversary Series was also neatly molded into a rectangular shape, which sparked the box-pressed trend that endures to this day.

Though ubiquitous in smoke shops today, Nicaraguan-made premium cigars were much less common in the U.S. during the '90s. The reasons are political, with events that began to unfold in 1979, when Nicaraguan president Anastasio Somoza Debayle was overthrown by the Sandinista National Liberation Front. In an effort to undermine the Sandinista government, the U.S. placed an embargo against Nicaragua in 1985, which forbade Nicaraguan products from entering the United States. The embargo lasted until 1990, but Nicaragua's revolution-torn premium cigar sector took years to recover.

In 1992, fewer than 1 million premium Nicaraguan cigars were imported into the United States, compared to 46 million Dominican smokes, 38 million cigars from Honduras, 6.7 million from Jamaica and nearly 6 million from Mexico. The Dominican Republic has maintained its prominence for the entire history of CIGAR AFICIONADO, but the other producers have changed considerably.

“We didn’t have new brands coming out every day like we do today.”

—CHUCK LEVI, IWAN RIES & CO.

In 1993—the first full year of CIGAR AFICIONADO as a publication—we rated 190 cigars. Only two were from Nicaragua. Last year, we tasted 774 cigars, and 272 were from Nicaragua.

Today, Nicaragua is considered a heavyweight, the second largest exporter of premium cigars to the United States behind the Dominican Republic. Honduras ranks a distant third, while once-prominent cigar countries like Jamaica and the Canary Islands have been essentially wiped off the cigar-making map. The United States still makes a few premium cigars, which pop up occasionally in our pages.

The Dominican Republic has had a massive influence on cigar trends over the past 25 years. Iconic brands such as the Fuente Fuente OpusX, commercially released in 1995, and La Flor Dominicana Ligerito Series, launched in 2001, were instrumental in garnering critical acclaim for the country's premium cigar industry—and igniting a consumer obsession for bold, full-bodied blends that has never been extinguished.

The launch of the Fuente Fuente OpusX brand in November 1995 not only sparked a trend for full-flavored smokes, it set a new bar for consumer demand in a premium cigar. “We had never seen anything like that,” said Gary Pesh, owner of Old Virginia Tobacco Co., in a 2015 CIGAR AFICIONADO article. “All year long we would get phone calls from all across the country two to three times a day at each of our seven shops, ‘Have you got any OpusX?’”

Consumers were limited to two or so per purchase—when they could be found—and the cigars received high ratings in CIGAR AFICIONADO. The Double Corona size was named CIGAR AFICIONADO's Cigar of the Year in 2005, the first Dominican cigar

to take that honor. Other strong smokes followed on the heels of OpusX, including the Ashton VSG (also made by Fuente) and then a series of cigars from Litto Gomez of La Flor Dominicana.

“I remember when Litto [Gomez] came out with the Ligerito Series, and I remember thinking—now this is a full-flavored, full-bodied cigar,” says Matt Krimm, co-owner of Washington, D.C.-based W. Curtis Draper Tobacconist. Krimm started as a store clerk at Draper in 1995 and eventually rose to become co-owner of the store with business partner John Anderson. He says that many cigars today push the boundaries of the full-bodied expression—offering more power and intensity than smokes that were considered full-bodied in the past. “But the Ligerito Series, by today's standards, would probably be considered more medium-bodied, but still full-flavored,” he says. “Then Litto came out with the Double Ligerito, and that was even more full-bodied.”

La Flor Dominicana Double Ligerito launched in 2003 to appease cigar fans who craved even bolder smokes. Ten years later, in an interview with CIGAR AFICIONADO, brand owner Litto Gomez of La Flor Dominicana said the Double Ligerito was his company's biggest seller—and one of the most popular sizes was The Digger, a massive cigar at 8 1/2 inches by 60 ring gauge.

Sizes like The Digger, or at least cigars measuring 6 inches by 60 ring gauge, are commonplace in most commercial humidors today. Such large cigars were once considered curious oddities or novelty smokes, but over the past 25 years American consumers have grown to embrace oversized cigars as mainstream purchases.

In 2012, a year after The Digger hit the U.S. market as a regular-production size, fellow Dominican cigarmaker Ernesto Perez-Carrillo launched Inch by E.P. Carrillo. Every cigar in the line boasted a ring gauge of 58 or higher. But Inch drew inspiration from another of Perez-Carrillo's inventions: La Gloria Cubana Serie R, a cigar brand that, by many accounts, kick-started the big ring gauge trend in the late '90s.

“La Gloria Cubana Serie R was the trailblazer,” Krimm recalls, reflecting on the origin of the fat cigar trend. “It was popular. Years later, [Perez-Carrillo] was able to recapture that magic with the Inch.”

La Gloria Cubana Serie R originally came in two sizes—a 52 and 54 ring gauge—but later expanded to include a 6-by-60 and 7-by-58. Throughout the '90s, a cigar with a ring gauge of 54 was considered quite large. Brands that edged into this territory inevitably planted the seeds of acceptance for larger and larger cigars. In 1995, Ybor City-based cigar company J.C. Newman launched Diamond Crown, a brand with each size at 54 ring gauge. Bahia, a Costa Rican brand that debuted in the early '90s, featured a variety of 54 ring gauge cigars. And in 1994, Frank Llana of Villazon & Co (a company later sold to General Cigar Co.) created Punch Gran Cru. The Gran Cru No. 2 vitola, a torpedo that shipped in bundles of 10, also had a ring gauge of 54.

“In the late '90s, The Punch Gran Cru torpedo was the biggest ring gauge we carried at the time. It was popular—we were placing orders of 10 naturals and 10 maduros constantly,” says Krimm. “There was also, sometime in the mid to late '90s—Bahia and Bahia Maduro—they came in a red band and a red box, 52 ring gauge, 54 ring gauge. There was a big Churchill. Big ring gauge cigars. I remember they were big sellers. We sold a ton of those.”



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CLE Prieto	60 x 6	91
EIROA The First 20	50 x 5	90
EIROA The First 20	46 x 6	90
EIROA Classic	48 x 4	90
EIROA Classic	44 x 4	90
CLE Cuarenta	46 x 5 3/4	90
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Today's cigar market offers consumers an extreme number of cigars of different styles, strengths, sizes and countries of origin.

CIGAR AFICIONADO looked at the market in 2012 and decided that, for better or worse, big cigars were here to stay. It created the “Grandes” category for the tasting. Cigar purists may find the chunky sizes unbecoming. Others may see them as emblems of an American ideal—one that strives for bigger houses, bigger boats, bigger car engines—why not bigger cigars? In the first year that the category was available, CIGAR AFICIONADO tasted 12 grandes. In 2016, it rated 31. This year, it seems that every cigar company has at least one 6 by 60 in its portfolio. The trend isn't disappearing anytime soon.

Cigars have not only become larger over the years, but they have become considerably more expensive. Looking back at the original issue of the magazine, some of the prices are laughable. In the very first tasting in CIGAR AFICIONADO, the average price of all cigars sold in the U.S. was \$2.93. Seven of the cigars had suggested retail prices of less than \$2, including some cigars that are still sold today, the Arturo Fuente Chateau Rothschild (\$1.60) and the La Gloria Cubana Wavell (\$1.50).

Pesh, of Virginia-based tobacconist Old Virginia Tobacco Co. remembers what a big deal it was for a cigar to sell for \$5, then a princely sum. “The Zino Mouton Cadet was around \$5. It was unheard of for the time,” he says. “But it moved, people bought it.”

Cigar prices, like so many other prices, have risen steadily since 1992. In 1996, the average price of a non-Cuban cigar rated in CIGAR AFICIONADO was \$5.30. Last year, that average had climbed to \$9.90.

But rising prices are nothing new to cigar enthusiasts, and there are still bargains to be found. (Last year CIGAR AFICIONADO

tasted 75 cigars that cost \$6 or less.) In today's market there are cigars for deal hunters and there are cigars for affluent smokers who don't mind spending a few extra dollars at the cash register. Today, as in the '90s, there's a price point for every customer.

Though the quality of cigars suffered during the cigar boom as manufacturers rushed to meet soaring demand, the new and varied products that became available enticed a wider demographic of enthusiasts to enter and enjoy the cigar lifestyle—and the growing audience inspired cigarmakers to craft more interesting tobacco blends, intriguing cigar sizes and attractive product packaging. This cyclical relationship between the cigarmaker and the consumer persists to this day.

Variety is what contemporary cigar customers have come to expect, and what they have come to crave. Cigar smokers are accustomed to seeing new cigars every few months on commercial humidor shelves, and the hype and excitement for new releases builds consumer demand for cigarmakers' products. If new regulations from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration stifle creativity in the industry, one has to wonder how consumers will react to fewer and fewer products coming out each year.

The landscape of the U.S. cigar market may change, but consumers will inevitably drive the majority of that change. Tastes transform as people get older. Cigar smokers seek out new things as their palates develop. Cigar trends—like all trends—come and go, warp and fade as time marches on. What trends lie beyond the horizon? The next 25 years are in the hands of American consumers. ❖

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Cigarmaking has changed little in Cuba. Workers still craft smokes by hand via artisanal methods.

Cuba: 25 Years Later

A look at what has changed—and what has not—in Havana since 1992 BY GORDON MOTT

The golden era of Cuban cigars was in full force in the fall of 1992. The end of the Soviet Union's subsidies early that year had not yet severely affected the economy, and the tobacco industry still had plenty of raw materials, including gasoline and fertilizer, to grow fine tobacco. Production was stable, and the quality of Cuban cigars was outstanding—that fact is proven today by how great those 1990–1993 vintages have survived the test of time.

But the glory days were numbered. The beginning of the “Special Period,” as the end of Soviet support is known in Cuba, triggered a cascade of shortages and hardships between 1992 and 1996 that affected every aspect of the Cuban economy. In a perfect storm, the worldwide cigar boom was ramping up, creating unprecedented demand for tobacco and cigars, and putting pressure on every manufacturer to increase production.

The Cuban cigar industry, like its counterparts in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, couldn't resist the temptation to rapidly increase production to meet consumer demand. But the same problems that afflicted manufacturers everywhere—not enough aged tobacco in warehouses and too few skilled workers to handle

the tobacco and roll cigars—were evident in Cuba too. Those issues were exacerbated by shortages of basic raw materials. While no hard statistics have ever been mentioned, the Cuban government once announced it would try to produce 200 million cigars by the year 2000, at a time when it is not even clear it was producing 100 million cigars. The result was predictable, and caused what we have called the “Dark Period” of Cuban cigars, smokes from around 1997 until about 2002. The high incidence of poorly constructed cigars, under-fermented tobacco and shortages of the best-known brands harmed the reputation of Cuban cigars, a blemish that has taken years to overcome.

Back in 1996, during my first visit to Cuba, the “old” pure revolutionary Cuba still held sway. There were very few private restaurants, almost none of them legal, so the dining scene was dominated by government-owned eateries. El Aljibe and El Templete, which still exist today, were among the best known. (I still dine at El Aljibe on a regular basis.) I stayed at the Hotel Nacional, and was astonished by the rooms (so run down) and the food (just miserable). There were very few American tourists running around Havana. Most cigar shops

“Twenty-five years later, it would be an exaggeration to say Cuba is not recognizable, or that the deterioration of its infrastructure over 57 years of its revolution has been repaired.”

were not yet under the aegis of the La Casa del Habano imprint, meaning they were not as spiffy as they have become in recent years. The only good news was that the shelves were filled with cigars bearing box codes denoting prime vintages of Cuban cigars.

In the mid-1990s, due to economic hardships, Cuba began instituting economic reforms, and privately owned restaurants, known as *paladares*, began to pop up around Havana. It is also in those years that the big Spanish hotel chain, Meliá, opened its hotels in the Cuban capital. The Cuban government, through its Habaguanex division, refurbished many hotels in and around Old Havana, and while the properties remained basic and not the stuff of high-class resorts in major cities those hotels were clean. For the first time, an effort was being made to accommodate the growing number of foreign tourists visiting the island, which at the time were still mostly Canadians and Europeans.

The cigar monopoly, known by the turn of the century as Habanos S.A., also received a \$500 million infusion of capital from the Spanish tobacco giant, Altadis, providing funds for everything from raw materials in the tobacco fields to draw machines in cigar factories to a direct involvement in jointly running the company with a small cadre of European executives. The turnaround began to be noticeable in the 2003–2004 era, and by mid-decade, many cigars being produced were of outstanding quality again, without the same incidence of flaws seen a few years earlier.

It was during that period too when Habanos began its Edición Limitada program, and followed that with the Reservas, Regional Editions and finally the Gran Reservas, all of which have been welcomed by global consumers.

During these past 25 years, I have smoked some of the greatest Cuban cigars ever produced. In the 1992 vintage, the Partagás Lusitania, Cohiba Robusto and Montecristo No. 2 have been unforgettable smoking experiences. The special edition 1492, a corona-sized cigar produced for the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of the Americas, also ranks as one of my top five smokes of all time. Nor can I ever forget the 1998 Trinidad Fundadores or the 2007 Edmundo Dantes El Conde 109 or the 2010 Cohiba Behike. Each of these cigars deserves special mention because of their full-bodied, powerhouse of flavors, at the same time as maintaining a smooth balance—classic Cuban smokes.

But the biggest changes occurred inside Cuba starting about 10 years ago. When President Fidel Castro fell ill and nearly died in 2006, and then turned over the reins of government to his brother Raúl in 2008, those changes picked up speed. Although economic reforms had come and gone since they were first tried in the late-1990s, once Raúl Castro took control, the reforms became widespread, with more than 200 categories of “private enterprise” allowed, albeit under tight restrictions and heavy taxes. But new

paladares began to open regularly, and older ones, that had been forced to close at least once since they had begun operations, like La Guarida, became the new standard for dining in Cuba. Today, in 2017, you can often find dishes that compete with some of the best food anywhere in the world; the whole dining experience is not world class, but there are talented chefs who are catering to tourists.

Twenty-five years later, it would be an exaggeration to say Cuba is not recognizable, or that the deterioration of its infrastructure over 57 years of its revolution has been repaired. The level of decrepitude is often shocking, but the changes that began to be noticeable between 2010 and 2014, when President Barack Obama started the process to reestablish diplomatic relations, are now unavoidable. More and more buildings are being renovated. There are more restored vintage American cars on the streets. And new hotels are once again being built, with the Gran

Manzana Kempinski already open and being touted as Cuba’s first five-star hotel. Of course, the flood of American tourists triggered by diplomatic initiatives is also unavoidable, although the Trump Administration’s announcement to roll back some of those regulations may put a damper on new visitors going forward.

The quality of Cuban cigars is undeniably better than during the “Dark Period.” Currently the country is suffering the aftershock of three horrendous harvests in a row from 2014 to 2016, and even though the crop harvested in 2017 was excellent, there are still shortages of big cigars and the country’s most iconic brand, Cohiba and particularly the ultra-premium Behike BHKs. How Habanos is handling the shortages is still a concern, but it seems apparent that without sufficient raw material, they have cut back on production instead of repeating the mistakes of 20 years ago.

The bottom line is that Cuba remains a fascinating place to visit. And while many things look quite similar to how they appeared in 1992, some of the hardships of earlier years no longer exist. ♦



Havana’s restaurant scene was a wasteland 25 years ago, but today fine meals abound—if you know where to look. Santy Pescador (above) serves remarkably fresh seafood.

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Cadet Lieutenant Patrick Walsh celebrates his graduation from West Point with his Uncle Pat and Andy Maiorana.



A once-in-a-lifetime moment to remember. Mark Ambac, Adam Runsdorff, Ryan Leeds and Matt Wood enjoy premium cigars while viewing the 2017 solar eclipse in Cashiers, North Carolina.



Alex Giaimo, Jeremy Goldman and Michael Torpe light up a few premium cigars at the Economides-Leiva wedding reception in Coral Gables, Florida.



Bob and Evie Larimore from Colleyville, Texas, commence their cruise to sunny Cuba by savoring a couple of fine smokes from Rocky Patel Premium Cigars.



Jeff Nichols and Sarah Cressy honor the memory of Jeff's father with rum and cigars at the Hotel Nacional in Cuba.



World War II veteran Peter Palmer is presented with a box of fine Oliva Serie V Melanio cigars by the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, Chapter 219, in Scottsdale, Arizona.



A.J. Jutte, Bob Feld, Sean Feld and Dave Steggert light up a few fine premium cigars while dressed to the nines at the annual Royal Ascot horse race at the Ascot Racecourse in Berkshire, England.



Edwin Crouch and Dave Zitney savor fine cigars while enjoying performances from Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, Neil Young, Paul McCartney and others at Desert Trip in Indio, California.



Fathers and sons, Robert Evans, Dr. Jeff Evans, Andrew Evans, Dr. Christopher Greer, Andrew Greer and Dr. James Trudeau, celebrate the good life on a trip to Prince of Wales Island in Alaska.

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Eli and Angelica Legarreta from Chicago savor premium cigars at a wedding reception in Cancún, Mexico.



Members of the Cigar Club at the Milwaukee Athletic Club gather for their monthly meeting in July 2016 to enjoy cocktails, cigars and dinner overlooking Lake Michigan in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Jacob Eichelberger celebrates his 18th birthday and first-ever cigar with his father Drew, uncle David, and cousins Reid and Peter in Orlando, Florida.



Alexander Zbiegien, Dr. Michael Zbiegien, Dr. Robert Kilpatrick and Dr. David Stocker toast to the 2016 Big Smoke with fine cigars in Las Vegas.



Adam Doll, center, commemorates his marriage to his wife Dana by lighting up great cigars provided by Dennis Bush, right center, in St. Paul, Minnesota.



On his wedding day, groom Matthew Baczyk finds the right moment to share a cigar with Ian Baczyk, Steven Bernstein and Dan Baczyk in Cancún, Mexico.



Mark Fisher, Ed Roth, Bob Newman, Marc Stein, Craig Wolf, Henry Roth, Bob Greenberg and David Bierig of Vineland, New Jersey, take their weekly poker game to Las Vegas, Nevada.



Friends and family gather to celebrate the wedding of Tyler Carver, center right, and Polly Stramm by pairing freshly-rolled premium cigars with fine libations in Savannah, Georgia.



On a recent trip to Cuba, Randy Iwasaki and Alvaro Piedrahita sample the local fare, enjoying a couple of fine Montecristo No. 2 cigars at the Parque Central Hotel in Havana.

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Ronald Tressen and his son Connor, home from the University of Nevada–Reno, enjoy a pair of post-Thanksgiving dinner cigars in Danville, California.



Brian Forbes and Mark Mueller celebrate the good life with OpusX cigars and glasses of aged rum at Magnum's Cigars Wine & Liquor in Phoenix, Arizona.



Groom Spencer Kemmeling hits the links for a pre-wedding round with friends and family at Old South Golf Links in Bluffton, South Carolina. From left: Ryan Weinhaus, Brice Benson, Ken Clair, Randy Kemmeling, Alex Kemmeling, Steve Richards, Paul Morreale, Adam Smith, Craig McCaw and Spencer Kemmeling.



Matt Pilolli takes a moment to savor a cigar on the night of his wedding with friends and family at Boulder Ridge Country Club in Lake in the Hills, Illinois.



Jedelle Baxter III, John L. Johnson and Clarence L. Clark III indulge in cigars after *Whisky Advocate* magazine's WhiskyFest in New York City.



George and Michele Collier, along with their four children, parents and in-laws, ring in their wedding day with an assortment of fine cigars at Casa de Solana in St. Augustine, Florida.



Jeff Harrison, Patrick Diaz, Tony Sayad, Greg Schleef, Michael David, Alex Delgado and Randall Patton from Los Gatos, California, light up at Casa Fuente after the Big Smoke Las Vegas.



Gabriel Pasquini of Montreal, Canada, celebrates his daughter Liana's wedding day in Cayo Santa María, Cuba, enjoying cigars with his son Evan and new son-in-law Claudio Ciampanelli.

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During a visit to China, Tom Polito and Taylor Joseph from Georgia pay a visit to the Cigar Ambassador shop in Shanghai and treat themselves to a couple of choice Cuban cigars.



Steven Lemons and his stepfather Les Betz look forward to their post-game Cuban Cohibas as the Dallas Cowboys take on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas.



Newlywed Chad Wehausen celebrates his marriage to Morgan Browne by lighting up a premium cigar with his father, Craig, at his wedding reception's cigar bar in Nashville, Tennessee.



Tommy Schulman and Madison Murany savor libations (as well as a superb H. Upmann No. 2 for Tommy) at the Churchill Bar inside the Hotel Nacional while on vacation in Havana.



No wedding is complete without cigars. Here, Gita Giroux takes to the beach and puffs on a tasty Oliva Serie V Melanio after her marriage to Craig Ward on the Riviera Maya in Mexico.



On vacation with close friends, Jay Moon, Don Jakeway and Jay Garner meet up with David Torres to enjoy Cuban cigars alongside choice libations at the Casa del Habano in Cancún, Mexico.

VICTOR CALVO FUERTE

A close-up photograph of several Victor Calvo Fuerte cigars and their packaging. The cigars are dark brown with gold and red labels. The boxes are blue and red with the brand name prominently displayed.

A logo featuring a large stylized 'V' with '50' inside it, and the word 'CINCUENTA' below it. Above the 'V' is the text 'VICTOR CALVO'.

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A small logo featuring a crown above the letters 'VC' inside a shield-like shape.

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Jacob Palermo shares a smoke with his grandfather Samme on his wedding day in Charlotte, New York.



Alumni of Trenton High School puff for a good cause at the 15th annual Sandy Federico Cup in Trenton, Michigan. Proceeds from the event provide a scholarship to a member of the high school's golf team.



A group of friends from Wisconsin, Barry Lockwood, Roger Knauf, Cliff Fritz, Mike Hammett and Kevin Uhlenbrauck, vacation in Aruba with great cigars.



The women of WildFire Ladies Cigar Society join together to bond over their love of premium smokes at Sundance Square in downtown Fort Worth, Texas.

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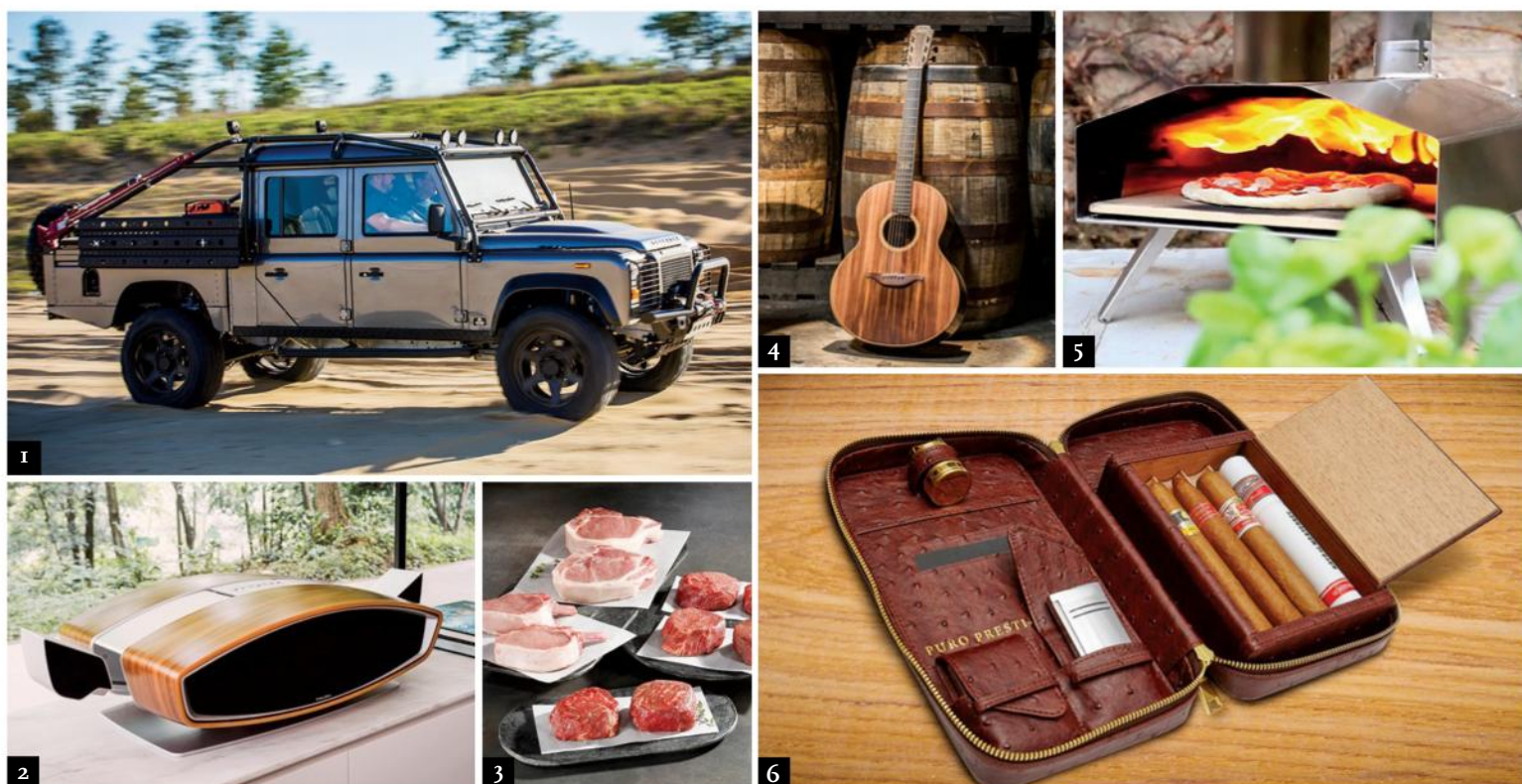
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1 PROJECT VIPER—EAST COAST DEFENDER

As part of its new Ultimate Vehicle Concept, Florida car customizer East Coast Defender now makes fully bespoke, handcrafted SUVs that are “unlimited by a specific bill of materials or budget.” The from-the-ground-up rebuilds of the discontinued Range Rover Defender are, however, limited to 10 cars a year. Project Viper, the first of the series, is powered by a 6.2-liter, 430-hp Chevrolet LS3 V-8 engine and includes uncharacteristic creature comforts like a Kenwood infotainment system, leather seats and puddle lights. Price tag: \$285,000. eastcoastdefender.com

2 WORKING THE ROOM—SONUS FABER AND WORLD OF MCINTOSH

Do you like your sound system to have the look of the 1970s, but the audio technology of the present day? Consider the Sfi6 hi-fi system (\$10,000), a collaboration of Sonus faber and the World of McIntosh. Looking like an inverted lunar lander, satellite speakers sprout from the top of this wood and brushed aluminum unit. The futuristic feel is matched with electronics that analyze the atmosphere of the room and regulate sound output. Don't worry. It plays music from any era. sonusfaber.com/en-us

3 MEAT AND GREET—SNAKE RIVER FARMS

The same choice meats that appear on the menus of such top chefs as Thomas Keller and Hugh Acheson can be the star of your own home cuisine. Snake River Farms of the high plains of eastern Idaho makes its American Wagyu beef and Kurobuta pork available for holiday meals and gifts. The slow-paced feeding method takes more time, but makes for succulent cuts. Available in several package configurations. snakeriverfarms.com

4 CASK-STRENGTH STRUMMING—LOWDEN GUITARS

After more than four decades, Northern Ireland luthier George Lowden has integrated his instruments with one of the country's emblematic products: Bullmills Irish whiskey. Crafted from barrel staves, reclaimed sinker redwood and ancient bog oak, the Bushmills x Lowden F-50 guitar is limited to a series of eight for sale. The cask woods are used for the guitar's appointments and a custom back inlay. The latter two woods make up the soundboard and back and sides. lowdenguitars.com

5 PELLET PIZZA—UUNI

It may seem custom-made for the wealthy urban metrosexual type who wants to play with fire and campfire cook on his stoop, but the Uuni 3 pizza oven makes great eats for any personality cooking in a compact environment. Uuni started life as a crowd-funded operation and is now on its fourth iteration (including the soon-to-be-released Uuni Pro). Fueled with wood pellets, this portable oven reaches temps in excess of 900° in 10 minutes. uuni.net

6 CLASSY CIGAR CASES—PURO PRESTIGE

We can never get enough ways to carry our cigars. London's Puro Prestige has debuted a new case that we adore, the elegant yet functional Hemingway Edition. The case (which is about the size of a very thick book) has pockets for a cutter and lighter, and an artfully designed compartment that holds four cigars. There's also a clever little metal cigar rest, plus slots for business or credit cards and a discrete pocket on the outside where one could store a passport or some papers. The stately case is cloaked in ostrich leather, inside and out, and retails for £275 (\$370). puroprestige.com



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